FORMAN.

A TALE.

VOL. II.

J. MOYES, GREVILLE STREET, LONDON.

FORMAN.

A TALE.

"———— – Hast thou as yet conferr'd
"With Margery Jourdain, the cunning witch;
"And Roger Bolingbroke, the conjuror?"
Henry VI. Part II.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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FORMAN.

CHAPTER I.

THE tidings of Lord Mondomer's death reached Belton, partially, that same evening, in a line of communication carried on from one farm-house, or peasant's cot, to another, originally set on foot by Hannacott, for the information of his old ally, Joseph Hart. To the ears of Joseph it accordingly came, but late at night; and, notwithstanding the temptation to that advance of consequence which the opportunity of imparting momentous news, whether good or bad, always bestows, Joseph had the extraordinary self-denial and consideration to withhold it entirely from the ears of his master or the young ladies, till their visitors should have taken leave the next

morning, and both divisions, Stanleys and Alfretons, should be fairly embarked upon their homeward voyage.

This degree of restraint Hart undoubtedly put upon himself, but conceived, naturally enough, that in the lower departments of the family he was entitled to some remuneration and indulgence. Accordingly, to all who were admitted to the butler's apartment the news was divulged, with a look of importance, a shrug of the shoulders, and the requisite gravity in the tone of voice.

Lord Alfreton's valet, a sporting attendant of Sir George Stanley, and Mistress Alice's own woman, were at that time present, besides the two chief damsels in attendance upon the ladies of the house.

"Yes," said Hart in the course of the conversation, "an elderly man to be sure, but not to talk of old age; and, as I always thought, a stout, hale gentleman of his years. But so it is, and enough, upon my faith, to make us all look about us. Here's one minute a new title, and coming down into the country here,

all flush wi' honours, and coats of arms, and what not ——"

"Aye, indeed! very true, Master Hart," added Mistress Alice's maid, one of whose affectations took the turn of sensibility; "and even before he gets settled in the old, ancient, Gothic hall of his progenitives"——

"The young lad there, the nevy, comes in for every thing, they say," said the minister of Sir George Stanley in the game department. "Well! he's made a pretty tightish thing of it; ha'nt he?"

"Only just one of the finest properties in the north," said the Belton butler; "and in the finest order."

"Come, Master Hart! now then, ladies! bumpers! bumpers!" roared Lord Alfreton's gentleman. "Here's to my Lord Mondomer as now is! and the bonny dame of Beeviston Hall, his neighbour! hey, Mistress Gough!" Here he threw in a wink at Alice's damsel, and display of half a yard of tongue at one corner of his mouth. "We shall hardly catch you,"

Mistress Gough, objecting to that toast, I reckon."

"I hope," replied the nymph, "that I shall object to nothing in a polite way, and good company. But what you mean by 'neighbour,' when we have no residence in Northumberland, or by coupling my lady and any young man's name together, with a look too, as if you know'd somewhat about things, is a sort of freedom as I don't quite ——; not that I say nothing one way or t'other, as is my duty, for few gentlewomen have enjoyed more o' their ladies' confidence, perhaps; therefore I don't say that there's any thing at all in such indelicate nonsense. But then again you see, ladies; you see, Master Hart — I don't say there isn't; so you get nothing at all from me."

"Not much, in truth, Mistress Gough," said one of the demoiselles suivantes belonging to the house; "and as to what my lord's gentleman was hinting on, its my belief that you'll never have much more about that to

tell; for thof' I don't say much belike as to trust and confidence, and secrets, and them there, if I've my eyes and ears, the young new Lord Mondomer ben't looking that way. How's'ever, I says nothing, no more than yourself, Mistress Gough. Only mark my words: odd things happens hereabouts."

"By my faith do they," said the lady more particularly attached to the person of Blanche Harlande; "has any one here ever seen the late Lord Mondomer's sister?"

"'Twould ha' been a little strange, forsooth," returned Mistress Gough, pursing up her mouth, "if I had not, when I lived with the Lady Frances Howard. But whether it was four or five hundred times, I wont positively undertake to say."

"I remember her, a good fine woman," said Lord Alfreton's man; "she must ha' made a noise in the world (for looks, and so on, I mean) at one time or other of her life."

Hart fidgetted about on his seat; and while the others were engaged, said, under his breath, and without opening his lips:—

"Be quiet, Rose! Have done with it." But Rose, who either did not, or chose not to hear him, continued —

"What I mean is, have any body seen her now, within this day or two, here in this country?"

"Not I," came readily from several of the party; "how should we?"

"As I look to be saved," added the girl, "I see her this very evening!"

"Pish, nonsense! impossible!" cried Joseph Hart, with a frown that she could hardly have mistaken, even if her bones had not been nearly crushed by his enormous splaw foot under the table, at the same instant. Besides, Hart had great influence over this damsel, being her patron, the powerful friend of her father, (a dairyman with many children) and was the person who had procured her her present very comfortable establishment.

She therefore held her tongue, but so abruptly, that it was full as likely as any thing that could have been uttered by her to have raised the curiosity of the whole divan below

stairs, had not the masters and mistresses adjourned their after supper sitting at this exact time, which brought the valets and ladies' maids into an immediate course of active service.

This was the first opportunity Rose had enjoyed of imparting to her young lady the evening's adventure already alluded to, and during the whole of the last four hours she had been looking forward to it as an agreeable circumstance: for she dearly loved her mistress, and preferred talking with her to any converse whatever, except, of course, tattle to her own immediate lovers, or to her own particular gossips about those lovers.

It was, therefore, something highly delightful to have a tale to hold which could not fail of exciting her lady's attention in a powerful degree.

But what we look forward to with eagerness is apt to fail us, whether in little matters or great; and so it proved upon this occasion, for the Soubrette stood in such habitual awe of Joseph Hart, that she could not but suspect

there was some good reason for her concealing a circumstance which had astonished and alarmed her; and something within whispered, that at least she ought to talk the matter over with her usual adviser before she made further mention of it. After some hesitating and deliberation, however, she decided upon gratifying her present inclinations, and (always intending to bring round the conversation to the point she aimed at, at last,) she commenced with moral reflections upon Lord Mondomer's death.

Blanche, who had not been apprized of it, was much struck and affected, and as it opened upon her mind a train of thought intensely interesting, she turned short upon her maid, giving her the unexpected and unwelcome permission to retire forthwith. The nymph lingered, folding things up, and endeavouring to renew the discourse, 'till the young lady's permission was converted into an injunction, with which immediate acquiescence was pronounced to be expected. The baffled Rose, therefore, wishing her lady a good night, but

with no very friendly voice, withdrew from the chamber, and descending a dark, circular, narrow flight of turret stairs, that led almost directly from her mistress's door to the offices, discerned at the bottom thereof no less a personage than Joseph Hart himself. He well knew that before she could get to her own bed, the damsel must of necessity make her appearance at that post, and had in consequence been patiently waiting for a good quarter of an hour, till he saw the gleam of her lamp flash from above, and would have waited treble that time if it had been requisite, which he rather thought it would.

"Step this way, child," said he; "I have something to say to you."

She followed him into a small room that was close at hand.

"Sit you down for a moment."

Rose obeyed, being in fact not ill pleased that at least she should have to tell her story to somebody.

"Now let's hear a little o' that ridiculous

stuff you was a-telling us when I stopped you after supper."

"'Twas no nonsense, Master Joseph, I can promise ye."

"Whatever it were," said Hart, "it's been all served up to your lady by this time, I take it for granted."

"And why should you think that?" returned Rose, with the air of a person hurt by unjust suspicions: I'm sure I cannot tell for why I wasn't to speak out, not I. But father bids me mind you in every thing, and have I ever done otherwise, I only ask that? havn't I minded you in this business, as well as all along?"

"Then you did not tell your young mistress?" said Joseph.

"Not a single word, as I stand here alive."

"There's a good girl! Now then, what was't thee did'st indeed see, or think you see'd?"

"Twas'n't *think*, I tell you," replied Rose; "but this was it:—There was the two

Raddelowe's, the maltster, and his cousin, you know, and young Dick Ascham, the miller's son, as wanted me to go down to Tarrant copse with 'em, and see if we could find any filberts."

"What! They young men, and a lass like thee, gadding and flaunting about the country!"

"Not in such a hurry, Master Hart; no such thing; one would ha' thought you'd know'd me better. There was Roger Stubbs, I tell thee, and his new Cheshire wife besides. Well, we went on, and when we comed in sight of the abbey, I said I'd go back. I hates the place at all hours. And Richard was so full o' his complimenting, and speeches, and all that fulsome stuff, as makes one as sick as poison. Then 'twas half past six already, and if we'd waited 'till 'twere dark, we might ha' had other company, and worser. So back we went, and we'd got near through the lane again, for we'd past the beeches; and says Stubb's dame, 'Keep all together, for there

is a great tall woman in the lane, dressed like a lady.'

" 'Well, and what if there be?' says Dick Ascham, for he's a stout heart — Richard, thof' he talks in fullish, flummery kind o' way, and sometimes, if any thing, too free. And says I (but I never thought so,) 'It's one o' our ladies from the hall, belike.' No, says one, and no such thing, says t' other; and says Stubbs, the man, 'We won't hurt her if she don't go to hurt us; but in case she should turn out to be something she should'nt, you see,—stand all close.'

" I've a notion, Master Joseph, she did not see us at first, for she drew up stately when she heard a voice, and stopped, and looked at us: and then looked behind her; and then on she marched, wi' such a firm step, and such a bold air,—there's nobody like her for that. I know'd her at once, and something seemed as if she know'd me, for she first folded her mantle about her, lifting it up to her face; then seeing my eye upon her,

for I couldn't take it off, she threw it all back again in a violent way, just as she always does, and gave me such a stare as I ben't soon like to forget. Right glad was every one of us when she got by: she'd a good half the lane give her to do it in, I promise thee."

"So you fancy this was the Lady de Lyle," said Hart. "Hast seen her lately besides?—Has't seen her five times in thy whole life, Rose Brenfield?"

"Often, in plenty to know her full well. You may take my word for that."

"I hope," said Hart; "I hope and trust, Rose, you had the sound sense and caution not to tell they folks who you supposed it was."

And here the chief butler did his elève no more than justice; for so terror-struck was she on the discovery, under those strange circumstances, that her usual propensity to gossip was for the moment effectually suspended; and it is likely that nothing that could have been offered would have induced her to venture upon mentioning the very name of the

lady, till a safe arrival at the hall, a good supper, and hearty draught of ale, a well lighted apartment, and vociferous company around her, had restored her usual faculties and disposition. Having assured him, therefore, that there was no need for anxiety upon that score, Rose added:—

"But why, Master Hart, was one to lock up one's lips about it at all?"

"Never thee mind the whys and wherefores, but be a good girl, and a prudent; and I don't say but one o' these odd-come-shorts I'll may be tell thee what I can about it; besides, you may be mistaken yet, after all."

At this hypothesis the damsel was on the point of breaking forth again.

"Well, well," said Joseph, "don't be obstropolous. I ben't denying what you say. To say the truth, thou'rt right enough, and that I *know* as well as you do."

"Laud defend us, Master Hart! you frighten one, speaking so solemn and positive. What then! you've see'd her yourself, I warrant?"

Hart made two slight movements in advance

with his head, which were followed by an application of a finger to his lips; and taking his lamp, bade her good night.

The next was a day of general departure; the Stanleys being about to quit the North for a while, were off with the first blush of dawn, and almost immediately after breakfast the Alfretons followed. Not but his lordship would willingly have dawdled on for several hours, devouring Blanche with his eyes, but not having made up his mind to speak out, either to her or her father. In a restless, unsatisfactory state, he now addressed a remark to one of the younger sisters, which was meant for the eldest: she, however, not being so drawn into particular conversation, he moved, without waiting for any answer, from the saloon to the hall, from the hall to the court-yard, and then back again, regardless of his brother's decided objections, (first broadly hinted, and then unequivocally expressed) to losing the whole morning in that tiresome kind of way, 'till at length, while grumbling at his conduct within the hearing of Joseph

Hart, young Alfreton was supplied by the latter with an argument more efficacious than any he had hitherto made use of — the news, namely, of Lord Mondomer's death, coupled with an intimation that it was not to be imparted to Sir Giles 'till the hall was clear of all company.

In delicacy, therefore, Lord Alfreton was now obliged to yield; the horses were ordered round, the farewell took place; and the eldest being dissatisfied with his own mode of bidding adieu to Blanche, which was intended to express, he did not well know what, and with her manner of returning it, which his utmost vanity could not persuade him meant any thing at all, our Castor and Pollux had a precious stupid ride home together.

Before Joseph had arranged his solemn face for the intelligence he was about to communicate, Blanche informed her father and sisters of it.

The tidings gave a shock to the old knight; the less, however, as for several days such an event had been considered inevitable.

"My turn next, I suppose," said he, as he locked his eldest daughter's arm within his, and paced up and down the hall; another o' one's, what d'ye call 'em, cotemp'ries gone! perhaps the oldest friend I had in the world! There't goes, all over betwixt us and the Mondomers now. None on 'em now living as cares a fig for old Giles Harlande, or he for them. Never mind, my love, didn't say't to vex thee."

"I do not agree with you there, father," replied Blanche, after some emotion: "I cannot believe, and will not, but that his nephew, the present head of the family, must ever cherish the love and respect for you that has become habitual to him: I'm confident he will. He is changed in some respects, it may be, but really we do not know. He had never seen any thing of the world, as they call it, when he lived so much with us; and I often think there might have been some mistake, and that he did not absolutely mean—and yet, oh! no, no, that couldn't be. There, father, we will not say any more about it.

Hugh is a great man now, with power, and riches, and lands. He's to be the Lord, isn't he?"

"So they say," returned Sir Giles. "Ah me! ah me!" continued Blanche, with a slight alteration in her tone; "to be sure he is: perhaps, therefore, it was all to be expected, with such a difference between us: and why could not I think of that before I opened my foolish heart to him? Oh! silly fancies, and silly girl!"

They took a turn or two, each absorbed in thought.

"I say, Blanche," observed the knight, "I'm doubting whether my old friend, Simon, as is just gone from us, know'd that business or not. Every day but one, since he was brought on to the castle, I ha' been over to inquire a'ter 'un; and he sent out messages full o' love and affection, as of old like. Simcox brought 'em; and the parson said he was sure his eyes brightened up at mention o' my name, and that he would ha' seen me sooner than all mankind, but the doctors wouldn't let 'un."

"Thank Heaven for that!" said Blanche: "it will be always a comfort for you to reflect upon, father. He died, I hear, in his nephew's arms."

"Nephew's arms, aye;" returned Sir Giles, with an absent air. "My love, had'st any talk wi' thy sisters concerning our party over at Otterbourne?"

Blanche made sign of assent.

"There's a somewhat queer about that lad now: unless he was quite all unhappy at our coldness, and drawing off, and that——He must be a greater hypocrite, not only than I believe 'un to be, but than there can be any temptation for 'un to be, for what would he get by it?"

"My dear, dear father," said Blanche, "I hope and pray that I shall have strength of mind to bear whatever trials in life it may please Providence to subject me to: but there can be no use in preparing disappointments for ourselves. Upon this subject you know my weakness, and I am heartily glad you do, as there can, and ought to be, no

concealments between us. For mercy's sake, therefore, do not lead me into a train of thought that I have in some measure got the better of. If Tom is going in to Carlisle to-day about the oats, I have something to send by him which isn't half ready."

With these words away she tripped, her heart full of her father's last remarks, notwithstanding all her very praiseworthy resolutions, notwithstanding also her having heard from both sisters the whole story over seven times before, at the least.

In the afternoon the three young ladies strolled out towards the water side, and talked over the company that had just quitted Belton.

"I should, beyond doubt, call him agreeable," observed Blanche, in the course of their chat; "but as to sensible, I'm not so clear. How many are there whose observations have a general silly turn, while the language they are expressed in is striking and clever! So I think it is with Lord Alfreton, in some degree. Then for his looks, if you will have it.—I suppose we must allow him to be handsome;

but several even homely persons have I seen, whose countenances are to me quite as engaging.'

"That is very ungrateful, Blanche," said Elinor, and was proceeding in jocose strain, when the other stopped her.

"Now, pray, my love, you have no intention to give pain, I know, but my spirits are not sufficiently recovered for that sort of gaiety."

She then fell into a train of meditation upon what both sisters had observed to her since Lord Alfreton's departure; and which (upon reflecting on his deportment during the visit) she began to fancy might possibly have some foundation: though, at the time, she never suspected it in the remotest degree; nor would she, by any means, allow it now.

"Never heed her gabble, Blanche," said Margaret; "I entirely agree with you that Edward has more fire and wit, and that the eldest can hardly be called well looking. He never seems as if he was thinking of what's going forward, but all mopish and wandering:

I do like persons who will condescend to be people of this world."

"I never said that Edward had more wit," replied Blanche.

"Nor will I allow," said Elinor, "that Lord Alfreton is not an exceedingly handsome young man: there's a sweetness in his tone of voice, and a delicacy in his conversation, aye, and an earnestness and spirit too: I don't in the least admit that he's moping, unless by moping you mean more gentle and well bred than——"

"I mean what I say," vociferated Margaret, "and I'll only put it to Blanche"——

"My dears, my dears," said the eldest, "why are all the village to be made parties to the discussion? And as for you, Elinor, I thought you were to have written a letter for my father this afternoon. I've no doubt he's waiting for you at this moment."

"Law! yes," said Elinor; "we'd better go back, hadn't we? though 'tis Margaret's turn."

This was another subject for argument; and

Blanche declining to return home immediately, Margaret accompanied her younger sister, for the purpose of extorting from her father's own mouth a proof that she had written no less than three letters of his dictating, (for in this way the knight was used to avail himself of his daughter's superior penmanship and orthography,) since Elinor had atchieved one.

CHAPTER II.

Blanche had not walked far after the others were out of sight, when a little girl of ten or eleven years old, whose employment, among other things, was to watch certain hogs while they were turned into the stubble fields, suddenly made her appearance before the young lady, and dropped a courtesy to the very ground.

"Well, Jenny, and what has't got to say, my child?"

"Not me, an't please ye my lady."

"Not you? what has brought thee here, then? You didn't post yourself here for nothing, Jenny, I suppose?"

"No, ma'am."

"Has any body sent thee with a message?"

"Ise, ma'am."

"Tell it, then, my dear."

"A ooman up at Sawken's barn 'ood fain speak to ye, my lady."

"What woman? why did'nt she come herself? did the woman send you?"

"No, ma'am."

"Who did, then?"

"Mun in black frock, my lady."

"Do you know who the man was?"

"No, ma'am."

"Did'st know that I was in this meadow when he gave thee the message?"

"Ise, ma'am."

"You saw me, did you?"

"Ise, ma'am, up at yon knoll."

"Very well, go thy ways, Jenny."

Blanche thought this message somewhat extraordinary; not that she would have hesitated an instant in going up to the barn, but from the recollection of her former strange adventure, which has been already mentioned, and which occurred at a spot still nearer to her father's house than the ruinous shed that was called Sawkin's barn. However, as nothing of that sort had ever happened before in the country, as her alarm had never been since renewed, and she was by nature com-

posed and firm in the discharge of her duties, she resolved to go, imagining that she was to hear some tale of distress, and most probably see some poor sick person of the neighbourhood; for to the relief of such she was ever accessible: and as to the abruptness of the message, that was readily enough attributed to the age and quality of the ambassador who delivered it.

Blanche quitted the valley, therefore, and after ascending a gentle hill for about three quarters of a mile, reached an insulated clump of larch and beach almost at the summit of the acclivity, which shaded the barn she was in quest of. The building was no longer of any use but for casual shelter, and that very imperfect, being shattered and open in various directions, roof inclusive.

Blanche approached the shed without hesitation: it is probable, indeed, that she advanced so lightly over the turf as not to attract the notice of the person stationed there, till she was absolutely within the hovel; for on entering, she perceived a woman of consider-

able stature standing with her back towards her, but not in the attire of a peasant.

The female then turned upon her abruptly, and it was much that Blanche did not shriek with amazement when she beheld the Baroness de Lyle!

"You are naturally surprised at finding me here," said the lady, "and I judge it best to inform you at once, that it will not suit me to answer any questions which curiosity may suggest upon the subject. Collect yourself, you are heated and fatigued."

"Very little," replied Blanche, after gazing as if stupified, for some time; "the distance is nothing from where—your message—from where that little girl—from where"—

"You speak very properly, from the place where my message reached you," said the baroness. "We are old acquaintance, you know." Blanche withdrew her eyes, as those of the other were fixed keenly upon her countenance. "You cannot imagine that I was actuated by any other motive than a desire of being serviceable to you, when I prevailed upon

your father to permit that residence with me of which we are both thinking at this moment."

Blanche made an inclination of her head, and the lady went on.

"Something, it may be, of the ways of the world, and habits of society, I was enabled to instruct you in; but I fear that, on the whole, your sojourn must have been irksome. My temper is too grave for a young person; and no wonder, for I have a morbid melancholy, at times. I am, in truth, a deplorably unhappy woman! Do not interrupt me, Blanche Harlande, with common observations, neither with your wonder, neither with your pity. Far am I from assuming that you owe me any regard for that ordinary exertion of civility! I merely take leave to say, and presume you will agree with me, that it ought not to have been repaid with ingratitude."

Blanche looked aghast, and trembled. Then recovering herself, observed:—

"There is something, madam, so strange and unaccountable in this meeting altogether, that it is most probable I shall not be able to

converse at all with the composure—with the recollection, I might wish."

"But you do allow," said the other, "that the intercourse between us should not have been followed on your part by treachery?"

"Surely not," replied Blanche, with a firm voice, but pale as ashes.

"Then you acted contrary to your opinion, in calumniating me to the only relation I have now left upon earth; the consequence of which calumny, may be wretchedness that you have no conception of."

"I calumniate you, madam?"

"You, girl!" returned the baroness, in a voice loud with anger; "remember your idle talk in yon wood; your baseness in acting as a spy upon my actions; your ingratitude; aye, and miserable, contemptible folly, in revealing them."

"Heavenly powers!" said Blanche aloud, though it was not addressed to her companion, "Who could have believed this?—Who could have imagined it even?—I fear I have acted ill, I always feared it, and it is fitting I should

make what reparation is in my power. I shall attempt no evasion, madam," she added, turning to the baroness; "the curiosity, the very blameable curiosity, natural, perhaps, to my time of life, has, I apprehend, caused me to behave very unthankfully, very much and reprehensibly so, towards your ladyship. I beseech your forgiveness, and shall reproach myself more bitterly than ever, when you assure me, (and I am eager to believe it) that my own folly and ignorance were the cause of all the mistakes I have fallen into, and wild, injurious, susp—— imaginations, I would say."

"But, suspicions, you were *going* to say, young lady," observed the baroness, with a scornful sneer that irritated Blanche, who replied with spirit:—

"'I am perfectly ready to suppose, madam, and most fervently hope, that I have been in error, as I was unquestionably wrong in giving way to the spirit of inquisitiveness which led to what has displeased you. But this you must permit me to say,—that unless your present design be to excite alarm, or some such effect, by the

mystery of your conduct, you would not now have presented yourself in such a manner, at such a spot. Neither (I will take the freedom to declare) can I conceive"——

Here she paused, as if recollecting something, and added, with a deep sigh: —

" Unless, indeed, you heard it from one whom I certainly never expected to repeat it."

" And that is just the matter, Mistress Harlande," said the lady, " which we must have some talk upon. What you may think of me, is of very little consequence: what you may have absurdly related about me, is, except to your own self, of none whatever. It occurred to me indeed, to mention it, but that was not the purpose of my sending for you at this time. Attend to me. — My brother is just dead. I make not the usual remarks, and ordinary parade of sorrow upon that event; but I had a greater regard for him than might have been expected from a person of my habits towards one so utterly different in disposition and capacity; and I should have been inclined to lengthen his days, if it had lain in my power."

Blanche stared, indignant at this real, or affected apathy.

" I take it for granted," continued the lady, " that you have long made up your mind to think no more of any childish intercourse in the way of fondness, which may, at one time or another, have subsisted between his successor and yourself."

" Stop, madam!" cried Blanche, in one entire glow from head to foot; " it is necessary to say that I have had enough of this interview. I am not treated kindly, or even civilly. You are no doubt a person of exalted rank, and have weight in every society throughout the kingdom; but in this little neighbourhood our family have been ever looked upon with respect: I am not accustomed to answer rude and cruel questions, nor am I used to be 'sent for,' as you think fit to express yourself. Have you posted yourself here in this wretched hovel, and talked in this arrogant and unsuitable manner, only to work upon my imagination? I begin to think so in truth. Come down to the hall, and my father

will be ready to receive you as formerly. I, for my part, shall remain here no longer."

The baroness was seldom known to smile, but she did so upon the present occasion, and with a very remarkable expression of countenance.

Blanche followed the movement of her eyes, which rolled darkly from one side to the other, and for the first time perceived at her companion's right hand, walking to and fro calmly, within a few yards of the shed, a short figure of a man, in a broad flapping hat, that approached to a cap or bonnet, wrapt in a dark cloak, with his right hand in his breast, and the left upon his forehead, as if in earnest contemplation.

CHAPTER III.

Blanche felt sick at heart; for in an instant the idea arose in her mind that it was the same ruffian who had before assailed her, though she could not see his face, and might not have known it again if she had seen it ever so plainly. This notion, too, united itself with all her originally dreadful suspicions as to the person she was conversing with.

Terrified almost beyond the regulation of her thoughts, Blanche stood with her eyes fixed upon the figure, pressing closer and closer with a nervous, convulsive movement, to the wall by which she leant, but making no attempt to escape.

While in this state, she saw the Lady de Lyle join the object of her alarm, and address him with a confidential air. They then walked farther off, and communicated in a low tone at first, but which swelled with occasional

vehemence; the lady in particular talked with warmth and apparent displeasure. The sound of her voice was frequently heard; but Blanche could not collect the words she made use of. Her companion, meanwhile, appeared to say little, if any thing, but turned from her sometimes shortly and hastily, as if upon peevish difference of opinion.

During this interval Blanche felt her spirits to a certain degree reviving; the suggestions of hope whispered that her fears might be solely the creation of her own mind, and she determined to persevere in her intention of returning. To do it by stealth in that bare, exposed, and comparatively distant spot, was out of the question; to attempt any unusual speed, would have been injudicious and unavailing: so with much deliberation, and all the intrepidity she could assume, she passed the other two, within a short distance, and in a direction towards her home.

They approached her, however; and the Lady de Lyle, in her usual authoritative mode

of speaking, desired her to stop, which she did accordingly.

" Little as you have deserved any friendly warning from me," said the baroness, " I shall yet make another exertion, to assure you that my last question was dictated by an intention of preserving you from evil. While you, silly babbler, ideot that you are," she continued, with looks of scorn and anger, " must venture to insult me in your refusal to answer it."

" I had no such design, believe me I had not;" replied Blanche, again overpowered with alarm and agitation ; " permit me to return to my father, I entreat you do — all this has thrown me into a state of confusion — I feel giddy — I feel unwell, and must go home. If you desire it I will promise to make no mention of this meeting."

" You are as ignorant," answered the baroness, in a tone of contemptuous disregard, " of my reasons for demanding this interview, for communicating with you alone out of your whole family, and for being in this place at all,

as you are of the government of the universe. *I!* wish to extort a promise of secresy from you? Not I, girl, truly. My motives for engaging you in this conference were far kinder than you have any idea of. Go, child, nobody designs to prevent you."

Then turning from Blanche, the lady again directed her steps towards the spot where they had originally met; while the man remained in the same position that he had maintained during the whole of the latter dialogue, looking earnestly at Blanche, but never offering to interpose, by word or action.

She once or twice caught a glance of his quick, fiery eye, but was too much agitated to make further observation. It may easily be imagined that she lost no time in regaining the hall; and her sisters were beginning to laugh and trifle upon her unusually protracted walk, when the state of her countenance was at once cried out upon, by her father and both the girls.

Blanche had intended to keep this adventure from the knowledge of her sisters; but the circumstance of the family being all together, upon her return in a degree of emotion that could not be concealed, made it totally impossible. She therefore went through all the circumstances of her interview with the Lady de Lyle, touching but slightly upon the appearance of the man towards the conclusion of it, and concealing the extent of her own apprehensions; as well to prevent additional uneasiness on the part of her auditors, as because the figure (suspicious and terrific as was his appearance at that peculiar moment), had never offered her the slightest injury.

It would be useless to dwell upon the extreme surprise and consternation of the whole party: wonder, mingled with serious fears and forebodings, occupied the minds of the daughters, while in a very little time the knight's whole feelings were absorbed by indignation.

"Confound the insolence, the rude, audacious

insolence on her," he burst out at length; "but she shall yet hear a piece o' my mind, as 'ull freeze the very blood in her body! Where shall we find her? Where be her dark, hellish haunts?"

Blanche could give him no farther information.

"I'll stir the whole county," continued he, "but I'll find her out, and unmask her; to insult and frighten my best o' girls in that way! Let me but get hold on her, and 'tisn't Lambeth, no, nor yet a lower place than that — as shall"—

"Gracious mercy protect us! What have you said, father?"

"Me said?"

"Yes," replied Blanche; "in the name of Providence, what did you mean by that word — that place?"

"Oh, nothing, nothing worth mentioning," said her father, remembering that Sir George Stanley had enjoined the strictest secrecy, even upon the very imperfect information that he had thought fit to impart: "but I'll tell ye

what I'll do, and it shall be this: I'll take and go over to Master Vavasore the first thing to-morrow morning: he'll know where to light upon her, if she be within fifty miles. He knows every thing. I'gad, I'm now and then of opinion that he's deeper than he should be. What the plague! wasn't he meddling some time back wi' one's family concerns, and faith much in the like way as this Jezebel? I can't tell what to make on't; but I'll try 'un — what better chance shall one get?"

Elinor, whose opinion of Vavasore's omniscience was firmly established, warmly seconded her father's resolution; and the eldest observed: —

"I rather suppose that may be as probable a course for your satisfaction, father, as any that could be suggested; but let me recommend caution in talking of the matter before the servants, till your inquiries have been made."

In the morning, accordingly Sir Giles repaired to the abbey, and was fortunate enough

to arrive just in time to anticipate his friend's departure from the place for the whole day, as Vavasore informed him; and the latter was actually mounted when the knight arrived.

The conference proved short, and far from altogether satisfactory; one portion of it, however, was agreeable to Sir Giles. As he had not been near the other since their interview in the course of the expedition to Otterbourne, it was very much what he could have wished that Vavasore should commence with a frank and full apology for having at that time obtruded a topic, calculated (in some measure which he could not have suspected or foreseen) to disturb his benefactor's feelings; and only attempting to justify it, upon the ground of affection for him, and interest in all that concerned him. This subject foroibly reminded the knight of what he came there about, and in a sudden and cunning manner, as if he expected some extraordinary effect from it, Sir Giles asked all at once if the other had heard

that the Lady de Lyle was in the neighbourhood?

"Having little intercourse here with any body but yourself, my esteemed friend," was the calm reply, "no one would have been likely to tell me of it. But I knew it perfectly well, and cannot entertain a doubt that I have actually seen her."

He proceeded to say, that he always imagined her to have taken up her residence at the hall, as was to be expected; that he had gained no opportunity of speaking with her, was entirely ignorant where she could be met with, and (after listening to our knight's narrative,) in the highest indignation at her deportment with regard to the young lady. He concluded by solemnly warning Sir Giles that she was a more dangerous woman than he could even form any conjecture of, and congratulating him upon this opportunity of breaking off all connexion with her. The knight, panting for further information as to her very mysterious character, alluded once or twice to the dark

stories he had now become, in some measure, acquainted with; but to those Vavasore gave little countenance, saying it might be so, but he was not apt to credit such tales, and the baroness was quite bad enough without any of those additions. He concluded by advising Sir Giles to make no further effort towards a discovery of her for the present, which might (he said) be attended with unpleasant consequences; and urged his decided conviction, that after the result of her meeting with Blanche, any expectation of finding her again in that part of the country would prove utterly fruitless. With such communication Sir Giles was obliged to remain satisfied and return home, to the disappointment of his two younger daughters, the peculiar mortification of Elinor, whose oracle had failed her in their utmost need; and, if any thing, to the relief of Blanche, who dreaded (particularly after the late intimation of her father) what might come out against one of the Mondomer family, and only hoped she should neither

see nor hear more of the Baroness de Lyle for the rest of her life.

The vain inquiries and activity of the three or four following days, convinced Sir Giles that Vavasore's prediction was likely to be accurately accomplished.

CHAPTER IV.

During these transactions at Belton, Hugh (now become Lord Mondomer) had been preparing for his uncle's funeral, which, on the tenth day after his demise, took place with all due solemnity.

It was performed in the chapel of the castle, a remarkably large one for a place of private worship, indeed considerably larger than any parish church in its vicinity; and the young lord, while the ceremony proceeded, was too deeply affected with tender and pious feelings, to make much observation as to who was present: considerable numbers were so, of the tenantry, and several of the principal gentry in the north.

Master Simcox (Sir Jonathan, as he was usually called, by the common people especially, in conformity to the custom of the age,)

read the service in a sensible straight-forward way, as if he studiously avoided those efforts at producing a grand and pathetic effect, which are apt to be displayed on such occasions; but homely as his manner might be, it was observed that he madé occasional abrupt pauses, and generally in parts where they were extremely out of place. The truth is, that the late lord had been a great benefactor, and, with all his airs of dignity, an invariably kind, and indeed familiar friend to him, from whom he could apprehend no possible competition; and Simcox found the performance of his present duty, in the way he had determined to go through with it, no such easy matter.

When the superb and emblazoned coffin had been lowered into the vault, Hugh raised his eyes towards the mass of spectators then retiring from the grave, and was sensibly struck by two figures at some distance from him, who apparently were hastening away to the furthermost part of the chapel: but being steadfastly determined to resist all wandering thoughts

upon so serious an occasion, he made efforts accordingly, and succeeded (or conceived that he had done so) in giving to the remaining prayers his undivided attention. Upon the conclusion of the whole, however, he again ventured a glance down the aisle in the former direction, and saw (with a deep and heavy sigh) the same well known figures withdraw by the gate that led out of the castle altogether.

Hugh waited for some time in an irregularly shaped apartment, the wainscotting of which was oak, or some still darker wood, but very large and commodious. It made no part of any distinct suite of rooms, and was only approached by narrow and perplexed passages. This had always been called his from the time that he came to live with his uncle; and the old gentleman had suffered him to fit it up with shelves, on which were stowed books, maps, drawings, globes, telescopes, and other articles that completed an agreeable and entertaining litter.

Here he still delighted to sit while alone, or

with easy, intimate friends; and here he remained (as we just observed) waiting, but waiting in vain, for those to inquire after him, who alone would have been admitted to his penetralia on that day of mourning.

The parson at length intruded upon his retreat; and was requested to return in the afternoon, dine at the castle, and pass the entire evening there, as Lord Mondomer wished for a long and uninterrupted conversation with him.

Upon Sir Jonathan's visit in the interim to his own parsonage, his wife came forward with a chuckle of satisfaction, and thus addressed him: —

" Master Hannacott hath been here already, Jonathan, which you know looks well in the parish, and puts every thing as it should be."

" He has!" said the vicar, " and what might he say?"

" My dear," returned the dame, " you seem thinking of something else, or you would be aware of the decency and propriety of his paying that sort of attention to the minister in

the first instance, now he's become steward over the whole Northumberland estate: let me tell thee, there are many gentlemen of property and good family, that havn't a fortieth part of the power that is now placed in his hands."

"Bless that dear boy for putting him there!" said the parson; "'tis a good beginning, it augurs well for his future reign."

"What a very odd man you are, Sir Jonathan," replied his spouse; "nobody who didn't understand you as well as I do, would guess, I fancy, that you absolutely talk of my lord himself with your 'dear boy!' But Master Hannacott thinks we bad better go over and keep his lordship company for this evening."

"You had better, I believe," observed Simcox, "postpone your visit till another occasion; for I have just left the castle, and am desired to return by myself."

"Oh, nonsense! I tell you that will never do; the evening passed with only you two together, will be heavier in hand than if he was

quite alone; moreover, the society of women, of quiet cheerful ladies I mean, who don't put him to form and ceremony, is the best thing in the world to draw a young man out, and make him talk when he's in low spirits; and then, I'm sure my lord never said I was not to come."

"No," replied her associate in life, "neither did he say that you were."

"It's all a mistake," quoth she; "I see how it arose; but as I entirely agree that it would be unbecoming to present myself when not asked, the best way will be to send up to the castle and inquire about it; and I'd lay my life then, his lordship gives me the kindest possible invitation."

"I have not the remotest doubt that he would," said the ecclesiastic; "and for that very reason, my dear, we will by no means send up to the castle. In faith there is no time to lose about making myself ready. Good evening, Rebecca."

With these words he retired, leaving his lady to vent her vexation, not only in general

fretfulness, but specific complaints of his pig-headedness, which was the term she (most indecorously) thought fit to apply to her husband's resolution in this affair.

Lord Mondomer had his dinner served in the comfortable apartment already mentioned; and when he and his companion were left by themselves, upon the removal of things, Hugh observed:—

"I suppose you know that some of the Belton family were at Mondomer this morning?"

"I heard so, my lord, but did not see them at the chapel, and they had left the place before I could contrive to speak with Sir Giles, which I had a great inclination to do. He and one of the young ladies, I think?"

"Elinor," said Hugh.

"My dear young gentleman," cried Simcox, "forgive my still calling you so,—would to Heaven that I could say any thing consolatory to you! It is not to be supposed, that knowing what I have in former times, I should not be aware of something having gone wrong between you and my excellent, honest, and

earliest friend, Sir Giles Harlande. You must think how astonished, I will say how disappointed and actually grieved it made me, to observe, that you were grave and reluctant as to that subject, which, in all former days, it had been your delight to dwell upon from the first moment of your arrival in these parts:— that for weeks you were here alone, without any attempt, or even desire (expressed at least) to visit Cumberland, which I naturally imagined to have been your chief end and design; the object that gilded your journey down, and was likely to have rendered this return to the seat of your ancestors a more joyful and interesting one than ever heretofore. These were my own confident expectations. Why they have been frustrated I am utterly at a loss to discover, and have been more than ever puzzled by Sir Giles's manner to me at an interview during the illness which we are all lamenting."

"What was it he said?" cried Hugh, eagerly; "did you mention my name?"

"I certainly did," returned the other;

"and am sorry to say, that with a bluntness which Sir Giles can at times assume, he said, he came there only to inquire after his *old* friend: perhaps (he added) his inquiries were not wanted, but he could not be easy, when your uncle lay probably on his death-bed, without doing his duty as he should formerly have deemed it: and but for that illness, he should never more have disturbed the family at all. He then turned away, nor could I ever contrive to get him upon the subject again."

After meditating for a while upon this account, Hugh informed the minister of the sudden cessation, on their part, of all correspondence; the various efforts he made to renew it, (more than the reader is yet apprised of;) and the unkind and unaccountable treatment he had met with upon the sudden interview at Otterbourne.

"Which was the more cruel," he added, "as I had so very lately made the most frank and unreserved attempts to obtain a full explanation; attempts which, notwithstanding

my ardent affection, cost me, I assure you, a considerable sacrifice of pride, after the neglect I had experienced. My good friend, how early do we begin to discover that this world is not the resting place! My utmost idea of felicity here does not seem irrational or extravagant: it was almost within my grasp, when it has pleased Providence to dash to the ground the uplifted cup of bliss, and to subject me to a bitter trial; the more bitter, because totally inexplicable."

"Aye, aye," said Simcox, "that's true to a certain degree; but the very inexplicability of it prevents me from despairing of the whole matter: not that I, utterly bewildered as I am in this strange affair, would excite any expectation that may only aggravate your distress; but you are blessed, I am thankful to say, with a firm and patient mind, and from the way in which you have already borne this grievous perplexity, I do not scruple to add that I yet look forward to the performance of a little business in my line—Oh! by how much the most delightful of any that I can be

called to while in my master's service upon this earth!"

"I'm sorry you have finished," said Hugh, with a smile of rapture: "come, refresh yourself, we'll have the health of such friends as are left to us; and, after all, I am not for omitting those in the adjoining county."

"By no means," replied the parson.—"So your lordship has advanced old John to the head of affairs?"

"Indeed have I. The early opportunity of doing so was beyond my hopes, considering how the office seemed to suit the former steward; it would therefore be most ungrateful to say that every thing went wrong: and it was my intention to have given that man, Stone,—Ned, as he was generally called, a much better situation. What can be the meaning of that fellow's wishing to leave me just at the time when I could have been of most use to him?"

"What, Ned, my lord!" cried Simcox; "does Ned desire to go?"

"For some reason that I don't comprehend;

something of a love affair, as far as I could understand him; but the fellow's been getting more and more jumble-headed rapidly for the last six weeks, and I really now suspect that it's out of his power to give a clear account of any thing. Why, if his love, or engagement, or whatever he called it, had been of a fair, honest description, he might have been provided for upon the estate, though he had married, and been surrounded by as large a family as both of Job's put together; and I told him as much. But then came twistings and grimaces, speeches about affection to me, and duty to the family, humming and stammering professions, in which nothing was quite distinct, but that, for some cause or other, go he must. Let him; he was far from a valuable or intelligent servant, but I had been long used to him, and use will endear any thing to one, I think."

"And you are actually going to part with him, my lord?"

"Undoubtedly. No constraint shall be put upon him. I take it he has left the castle

already. Of what service do you think he was to me?"

"Why, not of much," returned Sir Jonathan; but I should never have given that opinion as long as your lordship was disposed to favour him; unless indeed I had discovered, beyond doubt, any mischief about the man. I have reason to believe he was not loved by the other servants, or among the peasantry hereabout."

"So Hannacott tells me," said Lord Mondomer; "I suppose the fellow was ill-humoured, which of course I was not likely to be annoyed by. My dear sir, I have more to say, and what can be imparted to you alone. The friends I might have looked to two months ago (Heaven bless them!) are estranged from me. My only surviving relation."—

He shook his head, and paused; then looked towards Simcox, as if waiting for him to speak; but as he did not, Mondomer proceeded—

"You expected, I imagine, to have seen my poor uncle's sister at the castle upon the

late sad event. You don't answer. You don't speak, Sir Jonathan?"

"Does your lordship really wish me to answer that observation?"

Hugh made a sign in the affirmative.

"I did *not* expect it," replied the clergyman.

"For what reason, my good friend?"

"Simply, because I have been informed that the Lady de Lyle is devoted to ambition and worldly pursuits; that you, my lord, had little or none of her notice when at Westminster lately; that she is reported to dislike you; and, by the thorough and universal difference in your characters, I think it very much in course that she should. Violent and haughty minds are indifferent to the established attentions and decencies of society: I did not, therefore, look to see her here, even upon this occasion."

Here Simcox told the truth, but not the whole truth: the fact being, that from Hannacott, (a most cautious personage) deep in whose confidence, from the general similarity

of their honest natures, the vicar had ever been; the latter was apprised of many more particulars relating to the Lady de Lyle, and the horrible career she was thought to have engaged in, than Hugh imagined were even suspected by any besides himself.

"You will readily believe," said the young lord, "that I have not been inattentive to her; but, though two expresses were despatched shortly after my uncle's last attack, and a third when all was over; it is only on this day that I have received an undated communication from my father's sister, which (relying upon your tried and inflexible faithfulness) I shall proceed to——Stop!—Heaven and Earth! how came it not to strike me before?"

He rose suddenly, and opening a door, called loudly along the passages—

"Who waits there? Who's at hand?"

A domestic shortly appeared.

"Is Hannacott in the castle?—or, hold!—Who took the letter in that lies before Sir Jonathan?"

"I did, myself, my lord," said the man.

"What sort of person brought it?—a servant, a common messenger, or what?"

"Why, he might be a gentleman, your lordship, by's look and gait: not a common man, for certain, please ye, my lord."

"How dressed?" returned Hugh, with quickness.

"Just a common kind of a dress, my lord; the great broad hat and riding cloak, and falconers' boots, what ye call."

"Tell me, if you can, the very words he spoke."

"Why, I asked him, says I——"

"No, no," cried Hugh, impatiently,—"not what you said; but what he did."

"My lord, he never said not a word 'till I spoke to him, and not much then."

"Go on,—what was it?"

"Says I, sir, the service is just a-beginning, the funeral: you'll attend that, and go to church, to be sure, and I'll put your horse up, sir, the while, as ye bring letters for my lord. 'Church! you blockhead,' he bawls out, just as if I'd said somewhat to anger him;

and please ye, my lord, he looked as grim, and his face worked with a jirk and a twitch, and says he, 'Shall you see your lord before he goes in? Then deliver that immediately, and without fail.'—Nor did he speak a word more, nor stay a moment; and your lordship knows I did deliver the letter just as chapel was a-going to begin."

"You certainly did," said Lord Mondomer; "all that was very right; and can you say what became of this person?"

"He left the castle straightways, my lord; and Gaffer Glubsticks thinks he took the worst road of the two,—what leads to the hills."

Hugh then resumed his seat, and the servant retired.

The vicar, not at all comprehending either the chasm in his discourse, or the drift of the man's subsequent examination; threw out sundry remarks, which, without the ill breeding of direct inquisitiveness, were meant to extract the fullest gratification of his curiosity. But they did not succeed. Lord Mondomer appeared absorbed in thought for five minutes,

or more, and at length casting his eyes upon the letter, he apologized for his absence of mind, and requested Simcox to read it aloud, which he did as follows :—

" My Lord Mondomer,

" Accident prevented me from receiving your former despatches, before the third had succeeded them giving intelligence of my brother's death. This event may be supposed to have shocked me the more, as it was totally unexpected. I was not even aware that he had met with the slightest interruption to his usual good health. What effect these most unlooked for tidings have produced upon me, it is not of the slightest importance for you to know. I shall never see you again, nor should I have deemed it necessary to enter into this correspondence in compliance with ordinary forms,—but I own to you I am uneasy, restless, and my heart feels heavy, as it always is. I acknowledge my weakness in yielding to impressions that I once indeed was actuated by, but have now forsworn, and (having irrevocably chosen my part) shall continue to set at defiance. You have likewise formed your scheme. You abide by your father's example, instructions, and ultimate hopes.

Time will show whether he was right; but were he now living he would tell you that in this world he should never have expected the completion of his practice and speculations. A different power rules here from that which he was devoted to. But you, my Lord Mondomer, have united every thing. You have rank, wealth, influence, youth: What is enviable upon earth that you have not? Whom will you countenance?—Where will you bestow your hand?—Will you extend your power by an alliance with the noblest blood of the realm, or is it your pleasure to raise into grandeur some gentle being of inferior pretensions, whose endowment is her piety, whose principles are your own? Young man, you have been baffled already, you are no match for the force arrayed against you. Had you deigned, in any part of your conduct, to be actuated by the usual policy of mankind, you would have made me your friend. Little do you conceive of what value my aid might have proved against dangers from which neither your possessions, obstinacy, (which you call firmness) or devotions, may possibly be able to protect you. Go on, however, as you have begun. I desire no farther advances for a renewal of the connexion between us; follow your own course; look to that last, long, imperishable reward that you so stead-

fastly believe in, never dismiss it from your mind; this world may fail you; the confidence of youth is a dream and a bubble; the security of the most promising station may momentarily vanish, as a meteor.

"MARY DE LYLE."

"I should think little of this very strange production, in a common way," said Simcox as he returned the letter; "it would merely strike me as the production of some proud, gloomy mortal, who endeavoured (a common and absurd trick) to gratify her spleen, or exalt herself into importance by assuming a tone of mystery. But, my dear lord, when coming from that quarter, I confess I do not like it. Enough have I heard of the Lady de Lyle, to be convinced (excuse my freedom) that she is a bad and dangerous woman: but what description of evil you might fairly apprehend, or how you are to guard against it, I am at present at a loss to conceive."

"Nor am I disposed," observed Lord Mondomer, "to give myself the least uneasiness by conjecture or precaution. No, my

excellent old friend, I hope strictly to follow her concluding advice, though imparted, as it evidently is, in the form of banter and sarcasm. The portion of that letter which I best understand is cruel and malignant."

The parson shook his head.

"Can it be possible," continued Hugh, "that some vile machinations, more than hinted at in this paper, have caused the grievous misunderstanding?——Oh! never, never will I believe that my sweet, sensible, good, and beloved girl, can be actuated by their—by her base contrivances. I give you my word, that the first intimation I ever received of that lady being——being so totally different a character from both of her brothers, was given me by my innocent, incomparable Blanche."

The mention of her name, with which he had not lately trusted himself, threw him into a transport of passion. He clasped his hands, and paced up and down the apartment. Simcox also rose, and for some time they continued their conversation walking together.

"That no arts of the baroness will be powerful enough to persuade that excellent young creature of any thing really to your prejudice, is my decided opinion," said the parson. "But that they would of necessity fail in endeavouring to set the father against you, worthy and upright as he is, I am not so certain."

"That is to say," answered Hugh, "you have a better notion of the daughter's understanding than our old friend's."

"Not exactly so, either," returned Simcox. "Let me see—it cannot be above seven or eight years since your lordship has been thoroughly acquainted with Sir Giles. By which I only mean, that during that period you exchanged the reverence of a boy for something like the intimacy that might subsist between two persons of equal ages. Have you ever, during such intimacy, perceived any thing odd, any inequality in the temper of the old gentleman?"

"Less, I think, than in any one I ever knew:—I should have said, he was the most

uniformly cheerful and easy person to——Oh! true, true, I conceive what you mean,—for now you call my mind to it, I do perfectly recollect that when I was a lad of fourteen or fifteen, he would sometimes shut himself up for an entire day together; and Hart—aye, and you yourself, Sir Jonathan, in those days, were used to tell me he was ill, and must not be disturbed. No signs of illness, however, when he came out again, and always as merry as before. Indeed for the last two or three years, I do not remember the circumstance to have occurred at all."

"May I ask," said the minister, "how much the late Lord Mondomer thought fit to communicate to you, with regard to his friend's marriage?"

"Nothing more than that he was considerably advanced when it happened,—near fifty, I think, if not beyond it."

"Then you are not aware, my lord, that Sir Giles has been twice married?"

"Not I," said Hugh, with a stare.

"Yes, yes, he was, though," replied the

other; "and has all his life, in consequence, been subject to irregular starts of affliction, morbid suspicion, and fears of being surrounded by universal baseness, treachery, and ingratitude. That occasional distress of mind is the infirmity that I alluded to,—it may have been craftily worked upon to your disadvantage, and the more effectually because he loved you as a second father, and, unquestionably, has treated you like one."

"Unquestionably, indeed," cried Hugh.—"Now, my worthy friend, what you have mentioned is perfectly new to me, and in the highest conceivable degree interesting. If you are under any obligation to secrecy, or conceive yourself bound in duty, for whatever reason, to enter into no further explanation, let us instantly break off and have done with the subject. I have already heard enough to agitate me more than I could wish."

Simcox returned no answer for a minute or two, but stood as if meditating what course he should take.

"Undoubtedly, my lord," said he at last,

"I am at full liberty to divulge all that I know, and what is known to several now living besides myself: it is a mere consideration of discretion, and I judge it best to make you acquainted with the whole. Indeed the wonder is, that up to this hour you should have been unapprised even of what I have already related. Surely you must have heard that Sir Giles had a brother. Did you never hear of Mervyn Harlande?"

"Never in my days before; but that Sir Giles had some very near relation who died prematurely, I have been told, certainly. It was represented to me that this person had met with a violent death, the nature of which was peculiarly shocking; and our friend was so deeply affected thereby, that he never could endure the least allusion to it."

"What hour of the evening may it be?" said Simcox.

"Six, or thereabouts. You are not called home before night?"

"Oh, no, my lord; but—(looking first at one door, and then another,)—they wait clear

of the passages, I suppose; one had rather not be overheard."

That point was ascertained in every direction, and our friends took their seats again.

CHAPTER V.

"The parents of Sir Giles Harlande," said Simcox, "were both dead before I was born: his mother long before, as she did not survive for many hours the birth of her second son. I never heard much about her; what I did was favourable: but the father was a man of prejudiced and most tyrannical disposition. It was far longer than suited his wishes before his lady gave him a child at all. When the eldest did appear, it was nothing but fondness, rapture and indulgence. Little Giles, except when he crossed his father's comforts or inclinations, was never to be thwarted; every thing that he did was forwarder than other children, and every thing he said cleverer; so much so that his education was totally neglected: and if he had not been blessed with the most even, admirable, and mild natural qualities, his ruin must have been inevitable. He was, as I have been informed,

a fine ruddy child, and in that respect had so much the advantage of his brother, who was sent into the world nearly three years afterwards; that the father first roughly slighted young Mervyn in his infancy, and then, in consequence of certain sly and base habits as he advanced beyond childhood, the obvious fruits of his father's ill usage, the latter hated him as entirely as I believe a parent could hate his own child, and treated him, I have always heard, with a brutal severity. Deeply and dreadfully, my dear young friend, will that father have to answer for much of his son's subsequent iniquity! Mervyn's turn of mind, as was perhaps to be expected, first manifested itself in jealousy of his brother, whose pleasures and pastimes he took every opportunity to circumvent; whose failings he was eagle-eyed to discover, and, above all things, delighted to animadvert upon among the servants, or any low people whose ear he could obtain; and he soon showed considerable address in forming such a knot of partisans. The idleness and igno-

rance of Giles in particular were an ample field for the range of Mervyn's malignity; sometimes vented in ridicule and merriment, sometimes in venomous sarcasm; and the sole desire of superiority incited him to a conduct which, upon proper motives, would have been highly meritorious. In spite of difficulty and discouragement, the younger drove furiously and perseveringly at all the knowledge that could by any contrivance be brought within his reach, and with the effect ensured by a real energy in whatever pursuit. While the boys were both of tender age, the father died, after a short malady; and they say, expressed upon his death-bed some compunction for his behaviour towards Mervyn, and intentions of altering a device, which bequeathed every thing except a very scanty pittance, to the eldest son. That piece of justice, however, shared the fate of other good intentions; and the self-styled penitent left this world without carrying it into effect. It has been supposed by some, that these symptoms of a relenting mind in favour of his younger son took their rise from

a difference between old Harlande and Giles, the first of any moment that had ever occurred, which broke out a little before the time when the former was seized with his fatal illness. The young gentleman having for the most part resided exclusively at the paternal estate, occupied by field sports, eating, drinking, mean company and sleep; took a fancy, when a lad of seventeen or thereabouts, for varying these amusements by the addition of another object of interest, and fell violently in love (as many have agreed to call it,) with the daughter of a yeoman in the neighbourhood, who had held a farm under his father, and having thriven, made a small purchase of land. This personage, in virtue of a readiness at such topics of discourse as suited old Harlande, and a habit of blunt though exceedingly gross flattery, was admitted occasionally to the society and table of the latter.

"Village scandal had been extremely free with the reputation of Bertha Meere, in respect to the intercourse between her and the young squire; which indeed had been frequent

enough, and carried on under such opportunities, as to give some plausibility to those reports. From many a quarter it had reached the father's ears; who, conceiving that it could end in nothing more inconvenient than the ruin of the girl, paid little attention to the matter, or rather encouraged it; for this is the very speech, word for word, that I have been credibly informed he made to one who gave him the intelligence. 'No! is it so by the mass? Do all the folks say so? Dare to say there's nothing in it. Faith, though, if I thought there was, I must speak to him myself. Devil take it! morals, and that there, must be kept up. But, I say, d'ye mind the dog — just the old scrapes of his father. In t'other now you see nothing o' me; nothing at all in that sneaking fellow, Mervyn. Devil's in it if I don't think I should like him the better for some faults that had a smack o' spirit in 'em.' But very different indeed was the manner in which he received the account that Giles had ventured upon an offer of marriage to the girl, and seriously intended to

make her his wife. Such paroxysms of rage! as I understand: such bellowings and threats! (which would undoubtedly have been executed,) of preventing his son's intentions by the most violent methods; of consigning him to poverty, and the whole family of the young woman to a series of persecution, which must have ended in their destruction; that the eldest youth, who well knew the formidable nature of his father, and was of gentle temper himself, promised to give up all thoughts of Bertha, since the other disapproved of her; requesting only, with tears of anguish, that he might not be compelled to marry any other person. This however, old Harlande, whose influence upon the mind of his son was very great, and power over his future prospects unlimited, resolved he should be compelled to do forthwith, as the only means of making all secure against the first attachment. And that very imperious and hard-hearted man was actually on the look out (for so I have heard from one in his confidence) in search of a connexion that, without at all consulting his son, he should have

deemed a suitable one, when his schemes were cut short in the way that I have mentioned. Within an hour of his death it seems that he sent for Giles, and said a few words in a stammering and obscure manner, which the son always declared he could not at all comprehend: but Joe Hart, who was in attendance, told me he was positive that the name of Bertha Meere was pronounced, and, as he verily believed, with curses and imprecations attached to it. Now it so happened, that in spite of bad example, no education, and consequent idle habits, which, if they were innocent, it was all that could be said of them; Giles had remarkably little propensity to vice: on the contrary, so well-disposed a mind, that the religious instruction he had received from one of the persecuted reformists, who was protected by his father out of spite to the Abbot of Lannercost, with whom he had a violent quarrel; and which instruction was perhaps the only beneficial knowledge he acquired during the old gentleman's life; produced the best effect upon him. It has strengthened, as I have had good reason

to observe, with his increasing years, and even amid the tumultuous wishes and irregularities of youth was never totally disregarded. He sustained, therefore, many harrassing conflicts between duty and passion after his father's death, with regard to this attachment. His brother, of whose judgment our friend had formed a high idea, in proportion to his distrust in his own, was consulted; and he so strongly dissuaded Giles from gratifying his inclinations, urging the necessity, in his situation, for some sacrifice of his feelings, the general duty of self-control, and the unfortunate promise to his father, which, he very truly said, the latter had never thought of releasing; that the eldest formed his resolution in conformity to such advice, and for four or five years fancied he never should break it. I am sorry to say, my dear lord, the utmost stretch of Christian charity will only permit one to hope that at this period Mervyn had planned no deliberate design for the ruin of his brother, to whom, in appearance, after the old man's death, he became much attached; at least he was extremely attentive and sub-

missive to him. However that might be, it was soon settled that the elder should leave for a while his paternal domain, and mix freely in the world; while Mervyn, whose circumstances did not permit him to do the like, was to look to the property in his absence, with an earnest and most affecting injunction to be kind to Bertha Meere, and reconcile her to the distressing sacrifice that duty demanded of her former lover. Giles, after some years, returned to Belton the same honest character that he had left it. He had been for the most part restless and uncomfortable, and, notwithstanding the arguments of his brother, no little dissatisfied with himself for abandoning Bertha—the poor ill-fated Bertha! whose unalterable affections he conceived himself to have obtained, whose personal charms haunted his imagination, and who was reduced to wretchedness, which he was condemned to share, by his father's injustice and cruelty, and a foolish subserviency, on his own part, to what the world might think if he disparaged himself in wedlock.

She was almost the first person he met with upon his return. Lovely as ever, at least in his opinion; and so inexpressibly touching from an air of tenderness, which diffused itself over her upbraiding, melancholy looks, and brief, yet not unkind expressions; that he had immediate recourse to Mervyn's casuistry, though, judging from his former counsels, with slender hope of assistance. Here, however, poor Giles was mistaken, to his unspeakable delight at the time. The other unsaid or explained away all that he had formerly insisted upon; and you will easily suppose few arguments were necessary to induce the eldest to the gratification of the one predominant passion that had become the entire mover and sole occupation of his thoughts. Mervyn pressed forward the marriage with an impetuosity that would have been suspicious to any body but the innocent Giles; and oh, frightful and shocking villany! married they irrevocably were! This Bertha Meere, it appears, was in heart, and conduct indeed, the most profligate of her sex; though possessed of

management and cunning sufficient to have escaped in great measure, (but not altogether,) even the vigilant scrutiny of a country neighbourhood; and with such precipitation was this fatal measure carried through, that such of the honest rustics as might have felt it their duty to give Giles Harlande a hint upon the subject, soon judged matters to have gone too far; and thought, however erroneously, that their best policy, as well in kindness toward the lord of the estate, as care for their own interests, was to be quiet.—When the first blind fits of fondness were exhausted; her evil disposition forced itself even upon the notice of her husband, in acts of violence, insolence, wilfulness, and all the passions connected with confirmed and successful selfishness. Her unkindness broke her old father's heart, as I always understood, and do really believe; so far, that is to say, as to have actually shortened his days. The placid nature of her husband was evidently injured and corroded by perpetual uneasiness; which was, nevertheless, as things turned out, no unfortunate preparation

against woe to come; for your lordship has no doubt already anticipated the sudden and miserable end of so ill-omened a connexion."

"For heaven's sake!" cried Hugh, "go on as circumstantially as you have begun——."

His friend resumed: "It is absolutely painful to me; it is, I assure you: nor can I by any means account for every subsequent transaction in this abominable business so minutely as you might wish. I only know that, before they had lived together a year, Sir Giles received dark and dreadful intimations; and at length, (how, I never was able exactly to learn), the poor deluded man was assured, beyond all possibility of a doubt, that, during his absence from home, the wretch he had taken to his bosom had forfeited her honour to his own brother, and that the horrid incestuous and adulterous intercourse had since continued! I shall not attempt to enlarge upon the state of his mind when he got this information; indeed, I believe, for a time, people were placed about him, and he was not to be seen. In the

interim his brother and the woman absconded together."

"Gracious providence!" exclaimed Hugh, "can such things be? It is incredible, surely. What! Sir Giles Harlande to have suffered in this degree? that plain, open, and decidedly cheerful character?"

"Aye," returned Simcox, "even our old, merry friend. I have often myself wondered at his so completely outliving the remembrance of such dire distress. But no real affliction, no determination even to cherish affliction, can stand before time; and upwards of forty years have run out since these events. Then as for you, my good lord, your observation cannot extend beyond the last ten or twelve years at the utmost; in the course of which period, symptoms (which there is not the least doubt were the remaining effect of the original cloud upon his mind) attracted even your observation as a child. But I should shudder at the consequence now at this very hour, were the name of Mervyn to be abruptly mentioned within his hearing; and yet the

never knew the worst of this horrible tragedy."

"Do you know any thing more?" said Mondomer.

"As for the rest," replied the clergyman, "I may emphatically say that I do know, though I cannot explain it, having been myself an eye-witness of what I am about to relate. During Sir Giles's state of separation from his wife, and ignorance of her fate, and before his mind was sufficiently restored to enter upon measures for a divorce; I came home from college to my father, who, as your lordship knows, was a tradesman at Carlisle: he had been useful to the Harlandes, who befriended him and helped him in my education, and as long as I can remember I was a favourite with Sir Giles. At this time I was sent for to Belton, and am not at all clear that the part of my life I look back upon with most satisfaction, was not this opportunity of soothing the sorrows, and I may humbly hope, contributing in some degree to confirm and strengthen the good principles of that worthy

being. One fine evening, my patron returned from a short ramble in the most pitiable agitation. As soon as we could bring him into a state fit for explanation, it appeared that a sort of pedlar from the neighbouring kingdom had presented himself on a sudden, and, after inquiring if his name was Harlande, thrust a dirty and crumpled writing into his hand, and went on his course without further remark. The hand-writing our poor friend knew but too well: it merely contained these words, which, were I to live for centuries, I never should forget. 'Have mercy upon me, I beseech you! I beseech you in the name of Him upon whom you trust. I am barbarously used! I'm in bloody hands, and shall be cut off in my sins. Oh! if this ever reaches you, do — do — something to deliver me. I swear by the Lord that made me, I will confess my sins in the dust, and live only for atonement. I know not where I am; but the bearer of this can assist me if he will. Oh, wicked — wicked, undone wretch! What shall I do? All in a strange land, and not a soul to turn

to ——' It was signed 'Bertha,' without any addition — but in an indistinct character at the bottom, and such unusual orthography as to be scarcely intelligible, were words to this effect: 'Get aid at Kinross in Scotland, and search the hills to the eastward of the river Devon.'"

"What was now to be done? all was doubt, horror, and perplexity, while at the same time not a moment ought to be lost. I saw clearly enough that our friend was inclined to expose his own person in this adventure, which we were all resolute he should not do. So having at that period much of the zeal, activity, and enterprise of early youth, and the most entire love and regard for Giles Harlande; I prevailed on him to let me proceed for Scotland, in company with Hart (a steady, faithful creature), who, in whatever emergency, I knew could be depended upon. We reached Kinross after many obstructions and difficulties; and when we got there, and had applied to the constituted authorities (such as they were) of the

place; not the shadow of assistance were we likely to have procured, with our tale of an English lady in the power of ruffians; had not the enormities of the gang been lately carried to such a pitch of audacity, that at the very time when we arrived, a force was preparing to penetrate the Ochill hills (as they call the range to which we were directed); and that force, we, after a rough and tedious examination, were permitted to join. Before day-break our party set forward. I well remember the day, a remarkably raw and cold thirtieth of May; and it was past one in the afternoon before we had an intimation which could be at all depended upon, that we had better beat up through the mountains at the back of a miserable group of cabins that they called a village. What was its name? Stay, stay, I shall have it in a moment—aye, Dolling, or Doller, or some such word."

Here Simcox suddenly stopped, upon hearing footsteps in the passage; and servants entered the room with lights (which our friends were not sensible they wanted) and

supper. The intense interest that Hugh had taken in this narrative, and the emotions it had excited, seemed to have deprived him of all inclination for the meal which now solicited them. Not so the parson; his appetite appeared rather to have been stimulated by his exertions in holding forth, and he laid about him with prodigious energy indeed; till hunger being (by the usual process) at length appeased, and the dishes taken away, he again prepared to gratify his companion's curiosity.

"The name of the village, my lord, not that it much signifies, was pronounced, I'm pretty clear, if not spelt, exactly like the Spanish coin. The hills at first rose gradually behind it, getting wilder and steeper, when we had passed a castle, which looked (to me) like a fair and noble mansion; it belonged to one of the chief Scottish families, I think they said. Well, onward we went through these rugged hills for full two hours, I should guess, without meeting a living soul, or seeing any vestige of a human habitation: our line was extended

over as much ground as was possible, consistently with preserving a communication; and suddenly one of the party that was farthest advanced to the left, a long-legged, bony fellow, with a curious kind of axe, gave notice, by signs and screams, that he saw something which we could not. Having closed in around him, we discovered, on a spot of level ground, projecting from the side of a precipice, what I thought was a mere turf heap, but was given to understand it passed for a hut: we were soon under it, and from below it was unapproachable, and would have been equally so to the boldest and most active mountaineers. We then gained the very summit of the hill, and looked down upon the place; and at that time something was discerned hidden partially by fern, and winding over the brow, which the Scots thought fit to call a path; and by aid of which (the most dangerous service that ever I engaged in) we descended upon a sort of terrace, if one may so term it, where this cabin stood. My Lord Mondomer, we found no outlaws there; but

Hart and I discovered (only too certainly) the wretched object of our search. A dreadful token, and never to be obliterated from my mind, of divine retribution even in this world! A figure lay extended upon the earth in the centre of the den, covered by a long plaid cloak, with one hand only appearing from beneath it. 'There's been bloody work here,' was at once pronounced by several of our company, and on turning down the cloak, we recognised the mangled corpse of the once lovely Bertha! gashed in many places, across the throat particularly, the wind-pipe being cut entirely through, and totally dead and cold."

Lord Mondomer grasped him by the arm with an involuntary exclamation, and stopped the narrative.

"There," said he, "you need go no farther, my friend; I can perfectly understand the propriety of keeping Sir Giles Harlande in ignorance of this frightful catastrophe. But how could it be managed?"

"There was little difficulty in that," replied

the other; "even now, since both the nations have the same sovereign, there is less intercourse between the bulk of the people, English and Scots, than between any other neighbouring kingdoms in Europe; and at that time of day, had his wife perished in France or even Italy, the particulars of her death were more likely to have reached her husband, than from the country where it did happen; and a part of that country too, at so trifling a distance from Cumberland. No; it was sufficient to relate that her decease, though natural, was forwarded by hardship and perpetual agonies of remorse; that we had actually viewed the body, and attended her obsequies; and that the wretches into whose hands she had fallen were likely to remain for ever unknown, in a land where lawless disorder and depredation met with so little obstruction."

"Did you hear any report as to the murderers?" said Mondomer.

"None, my lord, that could at all be trusted to."

"I will not believe," again observed Hugh,

"no; such devilish wickedness is not in nature. I am determined not to believe that the younger Harlande was personally concerned in this deed of darkness. Though 'tis difficult to conceive that he will not have her destruction both of soul and body eventually to answer for."

"I also am unwilling to suppose it," said Simcox, "and certainly have no proof of the fact whatever. This is a cruel and distressing story, my dear lord, and what I should not have been inclined to relate to any man now living but yourself. But I have possessed you with it after full reflection, and am well satisfied with what I have done, and confident that I shall never live to repent it."

"I trust not, my good sir," returned Hugh; "but what became of that monster the brother?"

"Long dead and gone — died a Papist, if he ever thought of those matters at all, in the service of Philip, of Spain; he was killed under Frederic of Toledo, at one of those remarkable sieges, Alemaar, I think, in the

revolted provinces. Sir Giles doubted the first account that was brought of his death, but afterwards saw a man who had been his personal attendant when he fell, and that man put it beyond doubt."

"Then our friend," said Hugh, "parted with his brother for ever when the latter tempted his wife from him?"

"He did," replied the clergyman, "and being by nature of a light-hearted and merry turn, it was wonderful how entirely he recovered himself after Mervyn's death, and was well reconciled, by his second lady, to the honourable estate of matrimony. For her sake, indeed, he made (for a person of his habits) some wondrous exertions; waited, with other gentry of the north, upon his present majesty in the course of his progress from Edinburgh to London; and on that occasion was dignified with knighthood; an exaltation which conduced very highly to the satisfaction of his lady for the short time she lived afterwards, and, between you and me, my lord, pretty nearly as much to that of the

old gentleman himself. And now, wishing your lordship every possible benefit from a sound repose, it is well time for a certain Dame Simcox to be relieved from her own cogitations, and exhilarated by my presence again.'

" The Lord bless thee, my kind and excellent friend!" cried Hugh, as the parson departed, amid the attentions of the domestics, some of whom offered him a lantern, others a cloak, and those in the higher departments took the freedom of making an observation perhaps; such as, " a windy night, Sir Jonathan; or a delicious moon, Sir Jonathan;" or whatever it might happen to be.

CHAPTER VI.

The Earl of Nantwich, head of the Alfreton family, and father of the two young men whom we have lately met with on a visit at Belton; had, as we rather think has been mentioned before, a seat within a few miles of Penrith, called Scardefylde Lodge. Here, from the day that they left Sir Giles Harlande's. to the third week in September, the youths had remained; Edward shooting all the morning and sleeping all or most of the afternoon; and the eldest sometimes indeed going out habited and armed as a sportsman, but guiltless of any bloodshed, and occupied in thinking—first, of Blanche Harlande as she really was—then of the same young lady as a princess, or a duke's daughter, or a mighty heiress, the most desirable match in the realm, courted by every body, and preferring him. Then of the vain and empty distinctions of society, ever a restraint upon

the natural affections; the unsophisticated impulses of the heart, upon true love, virtuous love, &c. &c. &c. By the whole of which he meant, though not aware of it himself, that it would be nice if he could enjoy all the advantages of rank and wealth to which he was born, and every thing else on earth that he liked into the bargain.

He generally concluded by meditating over again upon Blanche as she really was; determining to give her a hint of his passion — determining, moreover, that she should be in raptures at it; and that some day or other he would undergo and conquer a vast deal of remonstrance, difficulty, and resistance from various quarters, in order to marry her. When he, in favour of this disinterestedness and pure affection, was to be the happiest of men, and she — oh, by how many degrees! the happiest and most envied of women! These reveries, though in the main pleasant enough for Lord Alfreton, had no tendency whatever towards making him better company to his brother Edward, whom he did not peculiarly suit at

any time. As little intercourse therefore, passed between them, as could well be conceived between two persons of the nearest relationship living in a house by themselves; and they rarely met but at meals. They were in this latter predicament one night after supper, when young Alfreton thought proper to give his brother the following piece of information:—

" I shouldn't wonder if I didn't go out to-morrow at all: not with a gun at least. One o' my dogs, the best too, has broke his leg in two places."

" No! has he?" said the eldest; " I'm sorry for that though: what shall you do about it? I'll tell you what, Edward, there's a visit that I think we both ought to pay in common civility; and if you like, perhaps we had better go to-morrow."

" Well; and where may that be?" said Edward.

" You know," returned Lord Alfreton, " the intimacy, one may almost call it relationship,

that subsisted between the late Lord Mondomer and ——"

"The Belton people," cried his brother, interrupting; "I thought how it was to end: so we're to toil over there and inquire whether the old gentleman is likely to pine and injure his health because the Mondomer property has changed hands. But I say, without hesitation, that I shall have nothing to do with it. We are very different fellows, Lionel: I never interfere with you and your amusements. Why can't you go alone? I have no wish to be dangling about after those girls."

Now it so happened, we do not pretend to define the causes of it; but so it was — that Lord Alfreton, though beyond all comparison he would have preferred making the expedition alone, formed, nevertheless, a determination to take his brother along with him; and felt a sensation something like fear, or it may be shame, in presenting himself at Belton so quickly after he had left it, without a better excuse than he was then provided with.

"I take no notice," he replied, with somewhat of a haughty air, "of those gibes and sarcasms which gentlemen of your profession think themselves at liberty to introduce upon all occasions; but you will give me leave to observe, that if you conjectured me to have any deeper motive for my proposal than the one which was expressed, that alone seems an odd reason for setting your face against the whole thing. I should not probably have brought it forward at all, but you yourself told me your shooting was put an end to. Very well — just as you like: such an unaccommodating temper may be quite natural to some persons; but I cannot help thinking that if I had been in your place, and you in mine, I should positively have been glad of the opportunity to oblige you."

"Plague take it," said Edward, "all you've been talking about is clear wide of the matter. Who ever refused to oblige you, if you wanted one to be of any real service to you? What I desire to know is, how my kicking my heels over at Belton for four-and-

twenty hours, without having a syllable to say, can do you any good upon earth?"

"I repeat," said the eldest, "it would be a fit and becoming attention to Sir Giles."

"Oh, no; I don't see that," returned the other; "if you put it upon that, Lionel, I'll be hanged if I go."

So saying, he made his exit, lamp in hand, and was crossing the top of the back staircase, in his way to bed, when he met several of the servants, and amongst them his own groom.

"Stop a moment, Jack; come here a moment;" cried Edward. "Well, I say, and how's the leg by this time?"

"Faith, I don't like the look o't, your honour: a baddish job I'm afear'd."

"No! how devilish unlucky! is it indeed? Why I hardly suppose we shall save his life."

"E'se, e'se, sir, we'll contrive that, I'll answer for't."

"But any how I'm done up for the season," said Edward: "I haven't another, you know, that's worth a groat."

"I was a-thinking, your honour," said the groom, "whether any o' my lord's dogs ——"

"His dogs!" cried Edward, with such a look as Ulysses might have assumed if it had been suggested to him to form an alliance with Irus, and avail himself of his vigour and talents in the overthrow of the suitors. "His dogs! I should expect as much sport as if I was to go out with pigs. Upon my soul and body! a great deal more."

"Your honour'll may be, be sorry now," said Jack, "that ye never took Sir Giles's offer."

"What offer?"

"Why the great large setter of all, you know, sir. Says Sir Giles to me, as I was rubbing down the mare when we was at Belton, 'Your master's a sharp lad: I don't know,' says he, 'a cleverer lad for a sportsman:' those was his words, sir; and he went on somewhat about his eyes was dim now, and he couldn't shoot much, and you, your honour, might have the setter, says he, for all the season, or as long as ye liked. His

worship always brags o' the dog, and swears that for two hundred miles round he'll undertake——"

"And well he may," cries Edward Alfreton. "In the name of wonder, why couldn't he mention this to me himself? Forgot it I suppose. Deuce is in it, Jack; that setter would be meat, drink, house, and clothes, in my present distress."

"Couldn't I go over wi' a cart, sir, and a bit of a letter, or the like o' that, from your honour? I'm morally sarten his worship 'ull let ye ha' 'un: and it will be best for the dog too, if they don't take 'un out regular, as I knows very well they don't."

"Ah, true: yes, indeed. A cart—" replied his master, musing on the proposal: "I don't know — that will hardly be the civilest way either. Stay — the dog I must have, there's no doubt of that. I'll see about it, Jack, and give you directions hereafter."

Jack, who stood during this conference between his master and the apartment that the latter was approaching, now fell back, and

was opening the door for Edward; but the latter declined it with, "No, never mind; I am not going to bed yet:" nor in truth was he at present in the least disposed so to do. His reappearance in the room below, disturbed his brother in the midst of plans for going to Belton alone, without committing himself, or inducing the family to think he had engaged in any thing at all out of the common way. His lordship, however, had hit upon no pretence that entirely satisfied his own mind.

"What! up yet!" said Edward, who perfectly well knew he should find him so. "Did I leave nothing below, here, Lionel?" And with that he commenced a brisk course of search behind hangings, and under furniture.

"Upon my word I have not observed," returned the other.

"I wish," said the younger, "you would tell one your exact proposal for to-morrow. Now don't be impatient: pray don't. I assure you, Lionel, it strikes me that we are not called upon to make inquiries at Belton merely from the circumstance of Lord Mon-

domer's death; but, at the same time, the old knight has always been particularly cordial to me; and if you are absolutely and sincerely of opinion that we ought ——"

"No," replied Lord Alfreton, after hesitating, "I will not say that, upon deliberation; but I think it a sufficient reason for going, if one was disposed to it in other respects."

"And you have then some other motive for going, and for wishing me to go with you?"

"It is vastly unpleasant," said Lord Alfreton, peevishly, "to be driven to the wall in this way. Perhaps, if you must know, I have. Mind, however, Edward, I by no means desire you to put yourself out of your way as a favour to me; though undoubtedly I am inclined to the visit, and would prefer our going together."

"And you might as well," returned the youngest, "have condescended to say as much half an hour ago. I ask no further questions," he added with a significant smile; "but shall be ready to attend your lordship."

"No, will you, indeed?" said the other.

"Indeed will I, Lionel: I'll go over with all my heart."

"Then give me your hand," cried Lord Alfreton; "I take it very kind of you — very. And since the thing is resolved upon, I should think the earlier we set out the better."

"Surely," said Edward; "the instant we have had our breakfast."

CHAPTER VII.

They made their words good; for by a light south-westerly gale, the sound of the chimes from Penrith tower beating the half hour between six and seven in the morning, was wafted to their ears, while advanced upwards of a mile upon their expedition.

"What did you mean, Edward?" said Lord Alfreton, in spirits at the expectation of meeting Blanche, and wishing for the additional gratification of talking her over on his way; "what have you taken into your head, that made you use such an expression last night, as dangling after the Belton girls? I know full well you were only in jest—You don't imagine I care more for one than t'other of them?"

"I don't think much about it," replied Edward. "They're nice girls, undoubtedly; that is, the eldest and youngest, for the middle one—I think—plain."

"Margaret is reserved," said his brother; "but when you come to be thoroughly acquainted with her ——"

"She's as good-humoured as the rest, I dare say," observed Edward; "but good-humour and reserve are not what we were talking about."

"Are you aware," said Lord Alfreton, "that a good many admire Elinor even more than Blanche?"

"Faith I'm not clear that I an't one of them," returned the other; "the little vixen! with her arch look, and laughing eye! Besides, mark my words, if she isn't the tallest of the three before a year's over her head, I'm a grandee o' Spain. And then when she fills out, hang me I can't tell — of course she's not formed like her sister yet."

"The figure of Blanche is exquisite," cried the eldest.

"Aye, aye, I believe it is, indeed," added Edward: "she's a fine creature, I grant you; but there's something in you, Lionel, that I can never understand: now if I take a fancy

for Mistress This, or Mistress That, I go on as long as it amuses me; and if the thing seems getting serious — why then I consider the matter over fully and fairly, whether it ever can possibly do; if it won't, the business must be put an end to, and it always can when you take it in time, without inconvenience to either party: no pouting, no sparring, no talking at each other — poh! no; just as great friends as ever, only in a quieter way. I always like a woman the better for having been once in love with her."

"All this," said Lord Alfreton, with asperity, "is extremely humorous and fashionable, and man of the world like, I have no doubt: but how or why do you apply it to me?"

"Because you are over head and ears with Blanche Harlande at present, and there's just about as much chance of your marrying her, as of her marrying the cham of Tartary."

"You gentlemen who understand life," retorted Lionel, "are so supernaturally shrewd, that nothing can escape you — except

what lies upon the surface immediately before your noses; and your discoveries of what never did, will, or could occur, are all of a piece with ——"

"Hide your face, Lionel! hide your face!" cried Edward, suddenly drawing his own cap over his eyes, and wrapping his cloak around him. "My dear fellow, forgive what I have said, and be guided by me only this once, I beg and beseech you; pray, pray, turn your head away while these people pass."

"Why, what's the matter now?" said the elder, who distinctly heard the approach of other horsemen following them, before his brother had done speaking.

"They're within ten yards of us," said Edward, in a low voice.

"But can't you tell one who?" cried his brother, conforming at the same time to his desire as to not looking back.

"Not so loud, my dear Lionel," said Edward, now absolutely whispering; its that pompous hound, Buttengall, and the cub, his

nephew: don't look at 'em for your life. They'd certainly join parties, and what would become of us then?"

Lionel knew enough of the divine to be aware that this was exceedingly good advice, and accommodated himself to it accordingly.

The doctor in consequence, arrayed in most ludicrous riding attire, by way of keeping up, under all circumstances, the gravity of his character; passed them without notice. He was mounted on a fine, active, free-going horse, of which he seemed in considerable awe, and to every one of whose movements he paid such anxious and painful attention, that our travellers easily escaped his recognition.

The sage was accompanied by a slim, white-faced youth, of sixteen or seventeen, apparently, with a most artless vacuity of countenance. The latter likewise disdained (or at least omitted) to honour our two brothers with the slightest observation; of which neglect, however, they had no reason peculiarly

to complain, as it was impartially extended to every thing around him, animate and inanimate.

"That's pretty well, I think, for one morning," observed Edward Alfreton, when the others had completely gone by; and he continued for several miles without intermission, to amuse himself at the expense of uncle and nephew, accompanied with peals of laughter at his own wit, utterly disregarding whether it had the sanction of his brother's co-approbation or not.

In this manner they journied, 'till on mending their pace, they again came in sight (to the mortification of both) of the very same persons from whom they had flattered themselves with a total deliverance.

"How very unfortunate," said Lord Alfreton; "that those fellows should be going on so far now, in our exact way! Oh, come, we'll pass 'em at once in our turn, and if they overtake us again—why we shall deserve their company."

"Hold for an instant!" cried the younger,

"I've a suspicion that the doctor and his flying steed have come to some disagreement. Look at him, Lionel—look at him now! Did you ever see such a brute? He's off, he's off, for millions! Ah! that fellow from the hut has spoiled all."

During these remarks, the learned gentleman did indeed appear to be checking his horse in a most unusual and injudicious manner, of which that noble animal seemed sufficiently sensible; and his discomposure at such unworthy treatment was manifested by evolutions, which (notwithstanding the temporary assistance that the doctor received, first from the pummel and then the mane) must speedily have brought him within the sphere of the earth's attraction; had not most welcome assistance been administered at that ticklish moment by the landlord of a hedge alehouse, who witnessed the conflict from his own door: but when he had secured the horse, it was perceived that a good deal more was necessary to be done, before the rider could penetrate farther into the country; the girths having slipped,

and the saddle being rather on the horse's side, than his back.

While these indispensable refitments were in progress, the Alfretons passed them with the fleetness of deer, and continued that sort of pace for some time, only slackening it when they came to a steep rise between two high hedges. On the top of this hill the road turned sharp, at right angles, and Lord Alfreton being forwardest at that moment, he had no sooner made the bend than his horse started entirely across the way, which gave Edward a hint, and he brought his up more cautiously to the spot.

"Aha, my noble lord!" said the latter, "that comes of thinking more of somebody's eyes, shape, complexion, &c. &c., than about where you were going. However, you're a better horseman than our friend Buttengall, that I will say for you."

"Those infernal windmills!" cried Lionel; "I always do forget them, and always shall: 'twas very wrong to place them close to the

road in this stupid manner, and just when they must come so suddenly upon the sight too."

"Nay," said the other, "I suppose they were put in the best situation for catching the wind."

"Then the road should have been prevented from sweeping immediately under the roar of their sails: besides, what's the use of having three corn mills all together?"

"Only one of them is for corn, I fancy," replied the youngest, "the others are for some manufacture, oil, or something: however, I'm not sorry to see my old friends, as they inform me, with the nicest accuracy, that we have only three miles and a half farther to go."

This trifling distance was soon disposed of. Lord Alfreton's heart beat quick when the old hall presented itself to their view: he was all in a glow when they ascended the bank on which it was situated; and as they turned into the quadrangle, they met, full tilt, the worthy knight, mounted, and forth issuing from it.

He stared in evident astonishment for an instant, then thrust out his hand with the usual good-humoured laugh, though still retaining an inquisitive look.

" Here we are again, Sir Giles," cried Edward; " no easy matter to get rid of us, you'll think."

" I hope, my dear sir," said Lord Alfreton, " that it may not be troublesome to you to receive us for this evening: we should not so soon have intruded upon you again, but having heard the account of Lord Mondomer's death, and well knowing the shock which so sudden and unlooked for a loss of one of your oldest friends, would—might—might be expected to—when one considers, that is, the feelings—the very affectionate feelings—that belong to all your family ——"

" Oh, ah! I understand now," said the knight; " well, and very kind it be of ye, my lads, proper and decent too, and shows an attention delicate, what ye call — and its more than any o' one's neighbours ha' done besides yourselves. But ye're right, I'd a great value

for poor Simon, and I miss him, and I always thought the time would come when we should have nothing to do but see each other every day, most days at least, and talk over old former years. I mean o' course when he should ha' grown sick o' high court scheming, and great life, and all the trumpery nonsense he was so fond on, and came to pass his days altogether in the country. But the Lord's will be done. He alone knows whether all ben't at an end between me and what's left o' my old friend's family for ever and ever."

"Why should that be, my good sir?" said Alfreton, warmly; "I have ever heard the nephew described as a well principled, amiable ——"

"Aye, aye," cried Sir Giles, "we'll let all that alone for the present; but I am thankful for this favour, and like ye better than ever for it, that's the fact. Ye've had a longish ride, my boys; dismount, dismount, and come into the hall."

"But we detain you, Sir Giles, we need not do that."

"Never mind me," said the old gentleman; "I wasn't going about any thing as signified much."

They accompanied him into the house, Lord Alfreton asking the whole way after the young ladies; but confining himself to generals.

"Oh yes, yes, all very well, quite hearty," returned the knight; "but I'll tell ye what I was a-thinking; if these inquiries and things were to be made, and very friendly 'tis—why didn't ye come over before? for Lord Mondomer's been dead this month, and buried upwards of a fortnight ago?"

This question might not have been so readily answered, had not the knight kindly undertaken the solution of it himself.

"I know why, well enough," said he; "you thought at first, and most did the like, that the funeral were to be at Westminster; and if so be it had, it mightn't ha' been over by now; what wi' the journey, and this, that, and t'other. And now ye be here, young gentlemen, I'll tell ye that you not only do me a pleasure, but a great service in the way o'

convenience moreover. Ye must know I've got two friends a-coming here to-day: they be travelling to see the north, I think, and sent their servants on upwards o' three hours ago."

"The deuce they did!" said Edward, who had a presentiment of evil, and could not conceal it; "you don't mean the Buttengalls, Sir Giles?"

"Indeed but I do though," replied the knight; "and to be sure if ever there was luck in this world, it's lucky for me that you came over here to-day: what would poor Giles Harlande ha' done wi' a great learned Oxford professor or somewhat o' that kind, and my two eldest girls out o' the way?"

"What!" cried Lionel, in a tone of voice that informed his brother of the whole extent of his cruel and overwhelming disappointment, and all the bitter chagrin that he was reduced to turn to the window in order to conceal, while Sir Giles went on quietly:

"Yes; Blanche and Margaret be over at Netherbie, for ten days. Monstrous provoking yesterday I thought it, when one first heard

o' these folks intending to come; but now ye be here, my lads, I don't care a fig about it."

We are in truth much afraid that Edward Alfreton positively enjoyed his brother's mortification; for certain it is, that his spirits and temper (which seemed a little tried before by his being apprized of the company they were to meet), now rose again brilliantly; and recollecting that notwithstanding the entire defeat of Lionel's hopes, his own object in the expedition was in as fair a train of success as ever, he commenced operations by a remark upon the paucity of birds that the season had produced; and a dialogue (admirably sustained), but of too generally unimportant a nature to be here recorded, took place between him and Sir Giles.

It had, however, the effect of relieving Lord Alfreton, who was utterly incapable of talking agreeably, or rationally even, for the first quarter of an hour after he had received this stunning intelligence. All seemed a mist before him; he gazed intently upon some logs of wood piled up by the side of the fire-place,

and hardly knew where he was, 'till at length the very acuteness of his vexation shortened in some degree its duration, and he began to reflect that good breeding and courteous manners towards the rest of the family, could surely have no tendency to injure him in the opinion of the eldest daughter. He roused himself, therefore, from his state of depression; and as, upon being told of Blanche's absence, he had thrown up the game as it were, and did not conceive that a soul could be in the house whose society would give him a moment's pleasure; he felt beyond description relieved, when Elinor tripped into the hall, and making directly for him, extended her hand, frankly announcing her satisfaction at seeing him again; which she observed to be ten times the greater for being so entirely unexpected. Lionel thought her the image of her sister, seized the hand with little ceremony, and kissed it over and over again, with less: at which the damsel, after crimsoning to her very fingers' ends, commenced a speech, at first rather incoherent, upon the subject of her

sisters: it conveyed, however, upon the whole, no further information than that they would feel sorry to have missed the pleasure of meeting him and his brother, Elinor was sure.

Sir Giles and Edward soon joined them, and a consultation occurred whether or no (as it was already some time beyond mid-day) it should be an indispensable courtesy to wait dinner any longer for the expected visitors. Elinor gave no opinion. Her father at first was clear in the affirmative, but wavered more and more every minute. Lord Alfreton thought, that from the situation and distance at which they had left the travellers, it would be vain to count upon them for some hours yet; and Edward had not the shadow of a doubt about the excusableness — indeed the absolute propriety — of going to dinner that very instant.

Sir Giles gave way to this opposition, after no very vigorous defence.

CHAPTER VIII.

NOT only was their meal undisturbed by any arrival in the midst of it; but Lord Alfreton and Elinor were sauntering upon the terrace after all was over, while the other two (for Edward's point about the setter had been carried already) were proceeding in a different direction to look at the dogs.

"Nay, nay, you are hard upon him," said Elinor; "I am quite clear, that is, I always understood he had a prodigious stock of learning; and then, 'tis natural surely that he should be too grave for you and your brother ——"

"Now come, Mistress Elinor, look me in the face, with your hand upon your heart, and say whether you ever yet saw a sillier calf than the nephew, or a more tiresome pedant than the uncle?"

"As for the young gentleman," returned Elinor, "I never hitherto had the advantage

of beholding him; but since we have always been told we are to reverence the doctor, for he was my mother's hundred and first cousin, I fancy; why I sit still like a good girl, and listen, and look as wise as I can: and in truth the doctor doesn't want words; you'll allow that—"

"No more do we," said Lord Alfreton; "such words, at least, as he is likely to favour us with, and as they are already so late—I own, I hope ——"

At this moment Edward came up, bowed to the very earth with laughter; at first totally unable to speak, and then forcing out the injunctions—

"Follow me—not a second to be lost. Come along without questions."

"What can be the meaning—?" said Elinor.

"Don't ask," cried he, "but come along this instant—I can't explain—upon my life I can't." And then, seizing an arm of each, he hurried them to the other side of the house, where the Buttengalls became visible, making for the principal entrance. The nephew led

the way — his appearance and deportment in all respects the same as when the Alfretons had seen him last: but "oh how changed from yon blythe hour!" the doctor, or at any rate, his steed. In lieu of the fine imposing vigorous animal that had borne him before, he made his joyeuse entrée upon a creature like a camel, "bony, and gaunt, and grim," with immeasurable length of neck, face erect, and apparently in deep contemplation of the heavenly bodies; displaying such a raw expanse upon his right flank, as eclipsed all other blemishes of a similar description, which were not few, and impeded as to his course, in the most inconvenient degree, by the string-halt.

Sir Giles assisted his visitors to dismount.

"Ye're welcome, doctor, heartily welcome, both of ye, to my old homely habitation. Here we a' got our friends, my Lord Alfreton and his brother to meet ye, and was all in hopes you'd ha' come on to dinner. Adzooks, it be near seven, if you'll believe me; and hollo, doctor! By all that's good and won-

derful, where did'st pick up such a beast as that?"

"Oh! my upright and excellent friend," said Buttengall, with a groan, "so unaccountable a misfortune has befallen me, such an injury, accompanied with circumstances of the basest and most premeditated villany! Much, as you must have seen, Sir Giles, of the frauds and impositions of mankind, I doubt whether, in the present advanced age, in the present state of morals and civilization, you could even have formed a guess of the scandalous transaction that has occurred within a few miles of your own dwelling. I have, my good sir, a tale to unfold ——"

"Now I was a-thinking, Master Buttengall," said Sir Giles, "that whatsoever accident, or villany, or whatever 'tis, hath befallen thee, if there's a long story to be told — thee'd best put it off 'till hast had some dinner, man. What says Master Joseph? Art disposed for a little refreshment, my lad?"

"Yes, Sir Giles," said the young squire,

"I should like it, because I never was so hungry in all my life."

"Nonsense!" cried the uncle; "the boy's for ever stuffing and cramming. My good sir, if you'll be pleased to anticipate the hour of supper a little, he can very well wait till then; and for my part, my appetite is utterly destroyed by pure vexation. Why, Joseph, you don't want to be gormandizing while I am in such distress?"

"No, uncle," replied the squire, with hesitation, "perhaps I don't."

"Upon my word though that seems a little hard," said Edward Alfreton, with a look at Elinor, which made her bite her lips, and turn abruptly away.

"Very hard, indeed," said the knight, "and shan't pass neither; I can't see for the life o' me, why my friend Joseph here shouldn't eat his dinner, and be sorry for your distresses, doctor, whatever they be, into the bargain."

"I am sorry," said the young squire, "that he has lost his hoss."

"Didn't thee fairly tell me but now," continued the knight to Joseph, "that was't ravenous, and inclined for some'ot to eat?"

"Yes, Sir Giles," replied the whelp, "I should like it, because I never was so hungry in all my life."

"Why, shalt ha't then—shalt ha't, by all that's precious," cried Sir Giles; and without listening to any thing the doctor might have further to urge against the measure, he delivered over the young man to the care of Hart, by whom, in another apartment, he was most abundantly supplied.

Doctor Buttengall, meanwhile, having committed himself in a positive refusal to touch any thing before supper, stuck to his determination, in spite of pressings and entreaties, and was sinking into a prose upon the usual effect of trouble on the appetite; he had just got as far as—

"So strangely are we constituted, and so uniformly, in this imperfect state, is the body affected by the mind: and vice versa——"

When Edward Alfreton reminded him that they were as yet ignorant of the particular misfortune that he was lamenting.

"True," replied the doctor, "and I entertain hopes, that as the outrage took place in this vicinity; either my worthy friend, Sir Giles, or some of his household, may help me to redress. Gentlemen, I protest to you, as a man of character, that when we set out for Belton this morning, I was as well mounted, if not better, than my nephew."

The Alfretons looked at each other.

"My pursuits have been sedentary, gentlemen: I never was much of a horseman. I make no pretensions to it, and candidly confess, that as I was upon a hot and violent animal, he rather discomposed me, at times, than otherwise. But we advanced tolerably well, till we had reached a short, sharp turning, as you emerge from a shaded lane. And the worst of it is, that, as if the turn were not awkward enough by itself, there are no fewer than three windmills, all together, which you might call,

positively, upon the road. You discern them not, till you are directly under them, and all the three were working."

Here the two brothers pinched themselves, shut their eyes, or fixed them upon the ground, and would not for the wealth of the Indies have beheld each other's face at that moment. The doctor continued—

"My skittish horse, upon their very first appearance, laid down his ears in that disagreeable sort of way that you probably have observed in those beasts, and backed with me uneasily and alarmingly, half way down the hill again. Joseph Buttengall was of no more use than a log of wood; and nothing in nature that I could have done, would have induced him (my horse I mean) to pass those detestable mills. While we were in this predicament, a fellow in a short cloak and leathern doublet, with a sort of cap on that had a particular little narrow brim, overtook us upon that shocking bad horse which brought me afterwards into your court-yard, Sir Giles. I dare to say all the rest took notice of it likewise."

"Laud ha' mercy upon us!" cried the knight with horror, "to be sure they did."

"I do not think," said Elinor, "in my whole life I ever saw a horse that could be reckoned at all like it."

"I believe not, indeed," said Lord Alfreton.

"You don't call it a horse?" cried Edward.

"This insidious villain," continued the sufferer, "addressed an observation to me with the deepest guile: and after remarking that a quieter horse would suit me much better, as I did not seem much in the habit of riding; he proposed to me to mount his, (which was perfectly well broke, he said,) just for the moment, while he tried to make mine pass the mills, which, after all, he did not believe he should be able to do. Well, he got upon my horse and went forward, but when the animal swerved as before, the fellow pretended to be frightened, and begged me to go first, because his started at nothing, as he declared: and, said he, 'Let the young gentleman follow next, and when both have cleared the corner, there's little doubt but the grey, having

seen the others go by, will go too readily enough.' So I did as he recommended; and his went by, to be sure, as quiet as a lamb. My nephew had more trouble, though nothing to signify: but, could you imagine it? that profligate rascal himself never attempted to follow,—never, as I am a man of reputation! He clapped spurs to my horse, and dashed down the hill in the contrary direction, as hard as ever he could lay legs to the ground. I hoped, at first, it might be joke, though 'tis a very bad style of wit,—but I am afraid, now, he has absolutely stolen the horse."

"Aye, aye," said Sir Giles; for none of the rest *could* speak, "little doubt o' that, I fear. Egad I know who did it, as well as thof' I'd seen 'un—just exactly the same."

"Do you?" said Buttengall, with reviving hopes; "then all may be well yet. Is it a man of the neighbourhood?"

"Ah, bless ye, doctor; this country! No, not it. We ben't up to such-like feats here. I'll tell thee who 'twere," taking the other's

arm, and walking him up the hall; "as sure as you and me's walking together at this moment, the fellow that did it be some Yorkshireman."

"Yes," cried Buttengall, eagerly; "but what Yorkshireman?"

"How in the world should I know?" replied Sir Giles; "Yorkshire's a large place, my good friend. Thee might'st as well ask one what Englishman."

Here, the younger Alfreton, who with the utmost difficulty had constrained himself hitherto; burst into another apartment, where he lay convulsed, and rolling upon the ground, while the rest did all they could to console the learned doctor: but all did not amount to much. As the last and best resource, the old knight directed supper to be hastened, and it came up more than an hour earlier in consequence.

The doctor, upon this event, notwithstanding his mortification, and the sympathy between body and mind, managed to coax down a very respectable supply of food; and the

young squire resumed the operation of devouring, or rather prolonged his dinner, with undiminished powers.

A few cups of exquisite malvoisie brought the philosopher into a better state of resignation, than the united precepts of all the ancients that he had ever read, (or talked of without having read,) from Homer to Seneca, both inclusive, would have been able to effect.

" I trust you will make a good report of the North, sir," said Elinor to her immediate neighbour, young Buttengall, by way of commencing an acquaintance. " You have been, I think, among our western mountains?"

The youth stared, first at her, then at his uncle.

" What do you turn to me for, like a great dolt?" said the latter; " cannot you tell the young lady whether we came from the east or west; what new ideas you have picked up on this excursion; and how you like the mountain scenery?"

" Mistress Elinor," said the nephew, turning his head a little towards her, while his

body remained as immoveable as if a spit had been run through it,—" I like the mountain scenery very well; and if that's the west, we're come from the west. And I have picked up some new ideas; they're in my journal; I keep a journal regular every day."

" Are you, sir, a fossilist, or a botanist, or a sportsman?" Edward Alfreton inquired.

" No, sir," replied the young squire.

" The two former branches of knowledge," observed the uncle, " we are shortly to enter upon. The latter is no pursuit of the mind, and a mere occupation for such as seem sent here, ' fruges consumere,' solely."

Elinor perceiving that young Alfreton had assumed his mischievous face, thought fit to take the discourse out of his hands.

" I do declare," said she, " I believe that to their dying day some people go on in ignorance of the most common matters, only from not venturing to ask a question now and then: for my part, I freely confess that I don't exactly know what you mean by fossilist, or fossils, or whatever the word is."

"Fossils," said the doctor, after three hems, a shake of the head, and sudden alteration of attitude, "Fossils, young lady, are——"

"Minerals, quicksilver, that sort o' thing," cried Sir Giles.

"Fossils," resumed the doctor, "are properly defined by——"

"What is dug up," said Lord Alfreton.

"The extraneous fossils," roared Buttengall, "have excited the curiosity of naturalists, both ancient and modern, who, each in his several system, have described them to be——"

"Petrified fish," said Edward.

The doctor fretted.

"That species of fossil" he again shouted with resistless lungs, "which may be called adventitious, is deposited and secreted in the earth by some extraordinary convulsion; such as earthquakes, or inundations, one of the greatest of which was the general deluge. Now, whether by the breaking up of the fountains of the deep, we are to infer that the primitive world was perfectly smooth in sur-

face, without the excrescence of mountains, and that such equal surface was merely an orbicular crust, which investing the mighty abyss of waters collected in the centre, suddenly clave asunder in the midst,—or whether the catastrophe was occasioned by an innumerable collection of pluvious particles, some exhaled, and some——"

"What has all this to do with the fossils?" cried Edward.

"Science," said the doctor, "has no enemy like petulance and impatience. Where was I?"

"Why, Elinor, my girl," said Sir Giles, "all this be thy doing, lass; well, and what answer has't got to thy question, amongst all this wisdom? For I'll be shot if I know."

"Nor I, either," replied the young lady, "unless, indeed, you, father, and those two gentlemen, were right in the little that you said; but I do so like," she continued, seeing a cloud upon the doctor's brow, "to hear any body talk finely upon the wonders of nature, however imperfectly we may understand the secret causes of them."

"I am happy to say," exclaimed Lord Alfreton, "that we do most completely agree in many of our notions, Mistress Elinor. I alşol ove to read or hear of prodigious events out of the established course, such as——"

"Such as," cried Buttengall, interrupting him with sufficient ill breeding, "the strange signs discerned in many parts of Europe, when Rhodes fell to the Turks. Three mermaids were seen at once in Naples' bay. All the tame fowls in England became perfectly wild. In Flanders, an immense fiery dragon was beheld, labouring through the air with cumbrous effort: and immediately followed the dreadful plague called Ignis Sacer."

"But, my good doctor," said Edward, "you talk of all these fables as if you put them upon the same footing with the deluge!"

"And, prithee, young man," returned the sage, "what may be the accomplishments, either natural or acquired, that authorize you to controvert what I say? Ignorant and indolent young people have a propensity to disbelieve every thing out of the sphere of their

own very narrow reading and observation. Are you acquainted, may I ask, with the works of the great Lilliclavius?"

"Never had the honour," replied Edward, "of hearing his name before."

"Perhaps, sir," resumed the doctor, "you may be somewhat less flippant in contradiction, when you have inquired into the character of his works, and hear of the events related by that accurate and able writer, who cites a downright eye-witness of what he reports. Titobritius, I say, testifies, (and he was present at the shower, as the other informs us,) that in the year 1586, (not thirty years ago, you observe,) it rained locusts in Thracia, and ducks and geese in Croatia. The locusts devoured all the fruits of the earth, while, on the other hand, the population was supported by the ducks and geese. And, within six months after this visitation, a thunder-bolt, red hot, and in the shape of a quince, fell upon the Orcades Isles, in Scotland, killing an old woman in its descent, and several other women and children."

"Then, what's the use, doctor," said Edward, "since several other women were killed, of particularizing the first old woman?"

"Pshaw! Stuff!" cried Buttengall. "This is not corversation."

So starting from his seat, wishing Sir Giles and Elinor a good night, and with rough hand arousing his nephew, who had long sunk in balmy slumbers, he marched off to bed, and the young one followed; while the rest (before they took the same course) had their laugh thoroughly and luxuriously out, at both senior and junior.

Betimes next day, they all departed by different ways, notwithstanding the urgent solicitations of the old knight, to defeat such a step; pressed upon the one party with more sincerity than politeness, and upon the other with more politeness than sincerity.

CHAPTER IX.

It was much about the time of this second visit to Belton, on the part of the Alfretons; that the Countess of Essex set off from the metropolis, and travelled through the country, night and day, with the utmost expedition, stopping only for such refreshments as were positively necessary.

Lord Rochester, also, at the same exact period, obtained a short permission to absent himself from the court; and departing from Newmarket, (where the king happened just then to be amusing himself,) made a long journey with equal celerity.

Notwithstanding their most strenuous efforts however, with all the accommodation of the age at their disposal, (which accommodation, indeed, at the utmost, could hardly be very effective,) it was not 'till the 29th of September

that they met at an obscure inn, in a remote provincial town.

"My angelic Frances!" exclaimed the viscount, "behold me here, obedient, as I am born to be, to your commands, and attentive to the slightest of your wishes."

"We actually then embrace again," said the lady, "after the separation of three weeks, which, to my poor heart, seemed thrice as many centuries! Come, tell me every thing, bless my ears once more with the sound of that seraphic voice. Oh! what perils, what terrors have I not endured! and really, considerable inconveniences I give you my word; very vexatious and disagreeable ones, I assure you. But this moment, this ecstatic meeting, amply repays all. There is a novelty too, and a wildness in the circumstances under which we now see each other, which, to minds that soar like ours, above the dull uniformity of every-day transactions, add a tenfold charm.—But you—how's this?—you appear to be——I had rather die than suppose it——but you

seem almost inattentive!—Oh! can it be that after ——"

"My beloved treasure," cried Rochester, "do not, I implore you, do not give the rein to your sweet sensibility upon this occasion. We have met now upon no scheme of mere dalliance and pleasure, and *that* you full well know. I am here in conformity to your own desire; and, upon the same motive, would have gone barefoot to the extremity of the globe: but, indeed, indeed, thou loveliest of beings, I do most devoutly wish that you would have condescended to be swayed by our united judgment, and not have exposed yourself to this harrassing journey; and—and—whatever it may be deemed requisite to venture upon, now we are here."

"That is to say," added the countess, "that you either think me a poor, feeble-minded wretch, without the spirit to share such dangers as the object of my affection, my adoration, is devoted to; or that I have fallen into that cruellest of contemptuous situ-

ations, that most abhorred of all calamities—the loving ardently one who has no equal feeling of—— "

"Desist, my angel," exclaimed Rochester, "if you do not purpose to distract me."

"It must be one or t'other," said the lady, pouting.

"This is too cruel," cried Rochester; "but I know you cannot intend it. Hear me for an instant. Hear me, I conjure you by our mutual passion!—I shall then easily convince you, that whatever scruples I may have raised, whatever attempts I may have made to dissuade you from becoming yourself a partaker in this fearful expedition, arose solely and entirely from that ardent devotion to your person which is the leading principle of my existence. Full well are you convinced, that it is not for myself I speak. What have you ever proposed that I should undertake, which would have imparted the remotest gratification to the idol of my soul, and I have not ventured upon it with alacrity? Forgive me then, if for one moment I may appear to cross

your wishes; and when you have heard me patiently, sure I am that you will do me justice. My adorable Frances, I must again declare, that although we are all to assemble at your desire, and upon your service, there are abundant reasons why you should not yourself have joined us. Neither of us two, my love, have as yet witnessed the ultimate proceedings of those dark beings whom we employ; and the natural, the sweet and amiable timidity of the sex, must render you an unfit spectator of such scenes. With regard to myself, I trust my courage will be found equal to whatever I may be called upon to sustain; but at the same time, I scruple not to say, that no possible trial of resolution could to me have been so arduous a one as——"

"Lord Rochester," said the lady, "this shall not serve. I am not to be treated as a child; and my resolution is fixed. Neither do I understand what you mean by—'acting solely at my desire, and upon my service.' I flattered myself, sir, that the slanderous designs of

the villain, whose odious name I shall not mention, had tended to the destruction of other hopes besides my own, merely.—Ungrateful and unfeeling as you are!"

"No!" cried Rochester, with a burst of indignation and remorse. "Wretched, weak, and doting fool that I am!—Why was I to communicate the indiscreet expressions of one who, up to that hour, had proved himself by me, a fearless and upright adviser?—Oh! miserable, miserable infatuation!"

"Then you give me up?—This is what I have long foreseen," said the countess, sinking upon a seat, and giving way to an agony of tears. "You cast me from you, alone, in a remote part of the country, in this horrid hovel, torn from my home, from my husband, from my peace, by your arts! You abandon me to Overbury's malice, and the finger of universal scorn. I deserve it, perhaps, but not from you. Farewell Rochester! and when you make your peace with your 'upright adviser,' inform him——"

"Nay, spare me, spare me, Frances," ex-

claimed Rochester, already at her feet.—"Why, Why, art thou endowed with powers so irresistible; with tenderness, feeling, and delicacy so exquisite! You know your influence—command me: to be subject to such commands is my boast and glory. With him who was once my bosom friend, I have for ever broken, in heart. Say the word, and in act I will discard and spurn him before the face of the world! Nay, should you even now persevere,—if it be now your will to proceed with——and yet, while time is granted——think, reflect, upon an irreparable act of vengeance!"

"I think, only," replied she, with the convulsion of hatred and evil passions upon her beautiful features, "that if his counsels had prevailed, my life would have been a hell upon earth!"

"What, if the wrath of our Maker should cut short, even in this world, the pleasures that we promise ourselves?"

"If you have fears," said she, "say so, openly and fairly."

" In your service," cried Rochester, with an air of desperation, " I despise them utterly; I know not the word. To thy charms am I devoted for life and death, for now and for ever. That is the grand point of my destination. That must and shall be carried, though endless wailing be the consequence."

This said, he strode hastily to and fro for some time, without speaking: and the tumult of his ideas and violence of his feelings exalting him in his own imagination, and being mistaken by him for grandeur, he was well able, for a while, to stifle the throbs of conscience, and make up his mind to the unhallowed act he had travelled so far for the purpose of participating in.

" And you resolve, then," said he at length. " You think yourself equal to being present?"

" Assuredly I do," she answered, but somewhat less confidently than before; " what should harm me?"

" I know not."

"*His* power can surely protect us?"

"Do you know, my love, I much more dread the man himself than —— than —— than any thing else."

"Do you?"

"Aye," said Rochester, deeply thoughtful. "But you can safely remain here, and I shall return to you in the morning."

"Oh! no, no, no!—talk not of my staying here while you are away, and —— with *them.* None of our people lodge in the house; the horrors of imagination would surpass all reality! I must go. I'm determined now—quite determined. What can I fear when you are with me?"

"No attendant," said Rochester, "must on any terms accompany us, and we shall be disguised like those itinerant beggars from the east, the roving Egyptians."

"That I am well aware of," returned the countess.

"For the present, then," said he, "I proceed to ascertain that all is in due state of

preparation. My black horse is steadiest in the dark, and will carry us both. Keep up your spirits, love, till the inhabitants of this place be still, and sleeping. Much have we to go through before to-morrow's dawn."

CHAPTER X.

Night was now very considerably advanced; not only had the hour of ten been sounded by the bells of the principal cities, but every separate village clock, whatever might be the difference and irregularity between them, had announced it likewise.

All had retired to rest, in hall and bower, in cottage and town: scarcely a light (in that sober period) remained burning at so late an hour, even in the most populous cities; and in rural habitations, whether of lord or peasant, none whatever.

One large, obscure, and melancholy apartment alone, the windows of which were concealed and barricadoed with scrupulous anxiety; whose walls were in some places profusely covered with torn and tawdry hangings, and in others left cold, bare, and reeking with unwholesome damps, had not as yet been consigned to total darkness. This dismal retreat

was partially illumined by one lamp, that threw a wavering and uncertain glare, first on one side, and then on another of the chamber, as the flame was agitated, and, at times, nearly extinguished, by the blasts of air which poured upon it from innumerable chinks and crevices.

Here, with a countenance of unutterable wretchedness, and in an attitude of meditation, in which all her powers of life seemed entirely absorbed, sat the Baroness de Lyle. Opposite to her, and at no great distance off, was placed a long deal table, and something stretched upon it completely covered with a cloth. By degrees, the fixed and inanimate stare upon the lady's countenance gave way; her eyes flashed and sparkled, her hand was occasionally advanced, her lips quivered as if in the act of speaking, and she started abruptly from her seat.

"If one could put off humanity altogether," said she, thinking aloud, "when we have decided upon the career which we mean to abide by, if one could (with whatever increase of torment,) assume in this world the nature and

condition, the irrevocable state to which hereafter we shall be devoted—— But to lose both worlds; to declare wilfully, openly, and of free choice, for the rebellious powers here; to receive their wages, and yet retain tenderness, conscience, compunction, whatever the weakness may be termed, sufficient to prevent us from the enjoyment of what we have earned, or from adventuring upon the necessary and only steps to secure that enjoyment, seems the most grievous imaginable situation.— Have I been cheated and deluded out of my soul?—Why, that should have been considered long ago. And after all, has he succeeded? He, my master and grand instructor? What mighty authority and dominion is he invested with—how is his pride gratified in the face of mankind? Pride! that all powerful principle which has unhinged the whole creation! What delicious and poignant pleasures have been his recompence? Alas! no, no! I am not deceived, but there is now no retreat. Something of glory may be attained; of intrepidity, at least, may be manifested, by un-

bending firmness in misery that would drive feebler minds to despondency and distraction. Whose prospect can be blacker than Mary's? I have no hope beyond this life, and yet cannot reach the degree of inflexible despair which must establish my superiority here. Ah me! 'tis the remembrance of the little detached incidents, the transient gleams of sunshine on my younger days, that wound me sadly, that press heaviest upon my ruined and abandoned heart. My brother Hugh, that brother from whom I afterwards separated in coldness and anger, never to see him more! That favourite brother upon a memorable occasion observed to me—'The violence of your nature, Mary, alarms me infinitely: your grief for your mother's death is beyond all bounds; it is positively headstrong repining and discontent. Bear up! She is taken from us for a while, 'tis true; but it will be through our own faults alone, if we do not meet her again where——' Oh! never, never! all is lost and gone

beyond redemption. What have I to look to? What will become of me?"

She here covered her face with her hands, and sunk quietly upon her chair, where for some time she remained as if immoveable. Upon hearing a footstep, however, approach the apartment; again she rose, the same fierce, haughty, and dauntless being that she appeared, not to the world only, but to her most secret confederates. A small door in the darker part of the chamber was observed to open, and a figure advanced without taking any notice of the baroness: and having approached the table in her front, lifted a part of the cloth, and stood for some moments in earnest contemplation of the object that it had concealed.

"Is all in perfect readiness?" said the lady. The other answered not, but continued to gaze upon what was before him, occasionally touching and altering the position of it with his hand.

"I have apprized them," continued the baroness, "that they have only to choose and

decide themselves upon the measure of their gratification; I have assured them, that as little hesitation will be made on your part, to the farthest extent of her vengeance, should it be deemed desirable, as if you were summoned to strike down a moth, or trample upon a reptile."

"Do you happen to remember any injuries that Overbury has ever inflicted upon us?" said her companion, who now deigned to advert to her, and came forward within the full blaze of the lamp.

He was clothed from the shoulder to the knee in a somewhat strait but shapeless black garment, which folded round his body; his arms were bare from above the elbow, as were his legs to a sort of sandal fastened as high as the top of the ancle. He wore a belt that resembled seal skin, with strange and mystical characters engraven upon it, and on his head (for he continued covered) he had a misshapen cap, of the same material apparently, that rose high above his forehead, on

which latter part was imprinted the deep and livid scar of a wound scarcely healed.

"The price of this their act of vengeance," observed the lady, "has been partly paid already by these unhappy young persons, in services to me. My word is pledged to them, and must be equally effective in their estimation, with your power. For the rest, I imagined that thou, Forman, hadst known me better, than to suppose that I should advert to the question, whether the ill-fated Overbury may have injured thee."

"I said *us*," replied the sorcerer with a malignant laugh: I may be in error, but suspect that the Lady Baroness de Lyle, who has devoted that man to a slow, fainting, wasting, and heart-sickening death, never received from him so great provocation as a slighting word, or neglect to bow the head before her."

"This," said the lady, walking from him, and talking to herself, but aloud, "is a pitch that I never could reach. This degree of malice is beyond me, and even now it is

scarcely comprehensible. Thy spite and rancour, man, (she continued again, turning towards him) are utterly lost upon me, and wasted in air. My mind you have corrupted beyond restoration. My hopes thou hast blasted for ever and ever; but my spirit and courage thou canst never shake."

"Talk not of firmness," said Forman, "when no girl of sixteen, bred up by her grandmother, is less above the prejudices of education than the ambitious Mary de Lyle, whose only views, whose only glory, whose sole enjoyment are, by her own solemn and irrevocable compact, limited to this earth. Look at me, the ladder you have risen by, the staff you now rest upon. To whom owest thou thy exemption from penury—obscurity—contempt?"

He waited some time for an answer, while fire flashed upon her from his red and restless eye.

"Go on," said she with calmness.

"The high and enviable honour, lady," he added, while his voice sunk to a tone of af-

fected mildness, and his features relaxed to a grin; "the satisfaction; the full and entire satisfaction to a mind constituted like mine, of propping and restoring your fallen fortunes, has indeed been allowed me. But might I be permitted to demand what has become of my portion in those worldly distinctions dispensed at will by two silly and contemptible minions under the direction of the Lady de Lyle?"

"Falsehood," retorted the baroness, "uttered without an adequate object, is pure folly; and shows a weakness and irritation, over which I in my turn might triumph, if I could stoop to such retaliation. Do you presume to affirm that you have not fully shared in—"

"Go to!" cried the wizard impatiently: "gold I suppose you would speak of. Miserable and dirty coin! ever accursed in my hands, fallacious and unproductive: fruitless as the toil of the alchymist. No disposition have I, lady, to enter upon pitiful details of labour and pecuniary recompence, like petty shop-keepers, or the lowest of ordinary depredators sharing their mean and scanty plunder.

What art thou? High amid the highest.— What am I? A bye-word and a hissing. My habitation mean and odious; my name employed to scare children; my person proscribed and hunted down; my very life in such perpetual danger, that as a measure of precaution, I have been reduced to deny my absolute existence."

"By whose influence has that life been guarded?" said the lady.

"By the influence of those," returned Forman, triumphantly, "with whose fate mine is inextricably involved! And yet, lady, what hourly perils have not I been exposed to; I, to whom the suffering, the drudgery, the toilsome part of your iniquity, is committed? Where was thy aid and relief when the wittol husband of that girl—that tool of thine, pursued me with shouts and execrations from hill to hill, like a beast of chase? or when—my eternal curse upon him for the deed, which shall be terribly expiated——"

Here he paused for some moments, pointing to the gash upon his forehead; then, with a

grasp of her wrist, he added, "Now all is at your disposal: every thing that we have hitherto laboured for: the remnant of some puerile affection was the safeguard to your late brother; but he has been removed by a power to which you had little reason to look for favour. Arouse thee, woman! all is our own! A mighty distribution of land between us, of that wealth which never can fluctuate; which must ensure homage, authority, and dominion, while the prince of this world holds his sway!"

"I perfectly," replied the baroness, with bloodless cheek, but a voice of studied composure, "I entirely comprehend your scheme and proposal; and with a total disregard of any disappointment, menaces, rage, or downright acts of malice, I, for the present, acquaint you that I withhold my consent from it."

The sorcerer eyed her for some minutes with a look of indignant scorn that gradually softened to a smile.

"Poor creature!" said he: "my rage, indeed! thou art below my contempt. Do take some lessons from the children whom you

hold in leading strings; the boy, Carre — Rochester — what do you call him? See if he would venture as far as you have done and shrink to go farther! You can advance his wickedness, lady, by counsel and deed. Overbury was the friend of his heart: was he not? 'Tis irksome, I am aware, my lady baroness, to hear the same remark over and over again; but I will take leave to repeat my question — What injury has Sir Thomas Overbury ever done you?"

The lady made no reply: indeed it was probably beyond her power, for her countenance grew perfectly black, and she breathed hard, or rather sobbed like a person in suffocation.

"Take time; take time;" said the evil being; "be seated, and collect yourself: and do not imagine that I think meanly of your spirit and understanding in the main. No, lady; an object of hatred you may be; of fear perhaps; but never of disdain. All that I desire of you is to exert the same freedom

from base shackles and apprehensions in your own affairs, that upon other occasions you so nobly exhibit. What weakness possesses you? You have no love for the boy; no acquired or natural affection, as they term it."

"None," said she faintly; "but time was when I had a very great deal for ——"

"Stuff!" resumed the wizard: "so by a senseless feeling about the recollections of your nursery, you would suffer yourself to be cheated out of all that you can by possibility look forward to. Have you not acted already as the enemy of the young man who is now in possession of the estates that should be your own? Have you not crossed his hopes, and meditated against him the deepest evil short of taking his life? What inconceivable folly! To wear out the remainder of your days in obstructing the marriage of a boy, under the ridiculous idea that you may chance to survive him, and without further exertion of your own, see the inheritance of your ancestors drop into your possession. Away with such idle dreams!

And truly I owe the youth a debt of a pretty heavy nature myself: and my revenge is not used to wait for the concurrence of relations."

"Now, why, thou devil in human form!" exclaimed the baroness in accents of the deepest misery; "can nothing satisfy thee short of my becoming an instrument in — in — the destruction of my own brother's child? Other crimes, and less than that, have I seen thee, even thee, refuse to be implicated in!"

"Indeed!" returned the sorcerer: "we know much of each other, lady, but not the whole, it seems. Stay — what is the hour?"

"On the stroke of midnight," said the baroness.

"I will not answer," resumed the other, "for the resolution of this silken puppet — this pampered creature of the court: he should have been here by now. Does he mean to venture, think ye?"

"Hark!" said the lady, "that was surely more than the howl of the wind. 'Twas

either the flapping of some large bird of night upon our barricade, or ——"

"Be still—be still," cried Forman: "'tis he—the horse's tramp I distinctly heard. Now is he our own through all eternity!"

CHAPTER XI.

The wizard seized the lamp, and hastened from the apartment, leaving his companion in such a state of mind, so totally wrapt up in the reflections suggested by their late discourse, that even the impending horrible operations were for the moment forgotten.

Again the light feebly flashed from the obscurer part of the building, and the sorcerer (his countenance lowering with a tenfold expression of malice) advancing also, with the hasty step that indicated vexation; preceded two figures arrayed in coarse, wild, and uncouth garments, of a variety of colours, and their faces smeared with stains of black and swarthy olive.

The baroness extended a hand to Rochester, and was contemplating the other personage with an air of astonishment; when the latter, with all the trepidation of alarm, rushed

towards her, clasping her tight round the neck, as if for protection.

"Why was that young woman brought here?" cried Forman, in a tone of authority that made Rochester absolutely start with surprise. "Had I conceived the bare possibility of such folly, care would have been taken to have rendered it impracticable."

After a pause, during which Rochester perceived, to his great discomposure, that the haughty look of displeasure, before which mankind in general sunk abashed, produced no more effect upon the being he was confronted with, than would the edge of his sword upon the solid rock, the Lady Essex exclaimed, pressing still closer to her female friend:—

"Oh! do not, do not be angry, father, (for by that term of reverence she had been used to address him,) if there be any error, it is my own entirely; I could not, would not leave him —forgive the first flutter of my spirits! 'tis all dismal, strange, and unusual to me, and I feel bewildered with riding so far, in a stormy frightful night."

"Can you command yourself now you are here?" said the leader in iniquity.

"I hope so — I believe so — indeed I feel confident, father; and I have often consulted with you before, you know. What will happen at this time, at all more alarming than ——?"

Here Forman broke in, addressing himself now to her paramour, now to the Lady de Lyle.

"Can she be trusted? Has she any power whatever over the terrors of imagination?"

Rochester made no reply; his own state of mind was any thing but satisfactory; his pride had been wounded, and yet other uneasy sensations, which no effort could repress, agitated and prevented him from acting with what he conceived to be the spirit becoming his character.

"You must go on now," said the Lady de Lyle, apart to Forman; "there is no remedy. Stand up, my dear Lady Essex; stand up boldly, and exert yourself! You want, I

think, no additional proof that I am to be depended upon; and I affirm to you most solemnly, that if you only possess a firm confidence in his powers, you can suffer no possible harm upon this occasion—none whatever. Admirable! There's my own lovely and high-minded friend! Prove now the falsehood of your enemies, who have reproached you with weakness of intellect, irresolution, and an utter incapacity to control your passions."

These wicked and artful observations produced the complete effect that was intended by them.

"You remind me well," returned the countess, with all the venom of her nature warmed to life again; "I came hither to avenge the most unprovoked, the most intolerable of injuries, and my purpose shall be accomplished. I have no fears — proceed — you know my will — let the detractor perish: and may the earth yawn and hurl me to her very centre, if I do not witness the act without remorse or emotion! Proceed."

Nor at this moment had she any apprehensions, her fear being overruled by rage and resentment.

"Come hither all of you," cried the wizard. They obeyed; and when the whole company had drawn round the table, Forman lowered a part of the cloth already mentioned, and disclosed, (as it appeared) the head, face, and breast of a corpse.

"'Tis Overbury! 'tis his own very self!" said the Lady Essex, with a shriek.

Rochester groaned, and turned away.

"Oh, Frances, Frances, hear me!" he exclaimed, wringing her hand with vehemence; "let us save ourselves before it be too late; let us save our souls from the enemy of mankind: we are on the verge of irrevocable ruin; of being sold to the evil angel for evermore."

"What might be your object in coming hither at all?" said Forman, in accents so mild and undisturbed as to shock them still more than even the horrid preparations they were witnessing.

"Listen to me, Lady Essex," said the

Baroness de Lyle; "the assistance I am to receive through your means, is conditioned upon my services to you in this matter for which we are now assembled. I have promised that you shall be gratified to the utmost, and so it shall yet be, if you continue to demand it. But if, from whatever motive, you desire to shrink from your part of the stipulation——"

"Silence, woman!" cried the grand deceiver, his voice echoing through the vaulted apartment.—"Art thou solely to reap advantage from that stipulation?—Observe, young countess, the image that lies stretched before you. The fate of one is linked with this ghastly figure, who has, as far as his influence extended, impeded your career in life, slighted your person, defamed your reputation, ridiculed your understanding, insulted and baffled your affections. His life is now at your will, and subject to your decision. Say the word, and from this hateful, and (believe me) truly formidable adversary, you are delivered, beyond the power of chance or

change. Beneath this board are materials for a slow fire; say the word, and as this composition melts before the flame, the strength of thine enemy shall droop and decay, his fibres be withered, the juices of his body dried up, and, with the total exhaustion of his effigy, will his own vital spark take its final departure."

"Be it so," cried the countess, with the rapidity of one who determines not to reflect. I have sworn it. I have panted for it; and shall I now forego my long-nourished vengeance? shall I abandon my security?"

"One instant pause,—one short moment, I implore of you," said Rochester.—"Oh! if it must be even so—if the security of our plighted affections does indeed require it—— Still, so lingering, so wretched a fate!—No, let us rather avenge ourselves at once, and by a more manly and open attack—"

"Where may your enemy be at this moment, young man?" observed the wizard, with a sneer, "and who is he?—One, if I mistake not, that has little to fear from your unassisted

violence.—— Hence with this trifling and indecision! Behind the shield of my power you strike in certainty and safety: no other means are prepared for the deed but such as I have exhibited, and those would reach him were he at the earth's extremity!"

Rochester said no more, and the Lady Essex, in the fever of her spirits, made a show of greater boldness than had been expected or desired from her: her eagerness and restlessness might now have been troublesome in their turn, had not her female friend known thoroughly how to manage her.

As for the chief instrument of evil, he mistrusted her from the first.

"Begin," said this weak and wicked young woman; "arrange your process, your fire, or whatever may be requisite. Bring the torch to me, let my own hand be the implement of my revenge, my just and complete revenge."

"Nay," replied the wizard, with that deadly and appalling calm upon his features which he was apt to assume when it was least expected; "the flame, lady, before which this figure is

to dissolve, must be communicated by far different hands than yours, or even my own."

"Now brace your nerves," said the Lady de Lyle, in a deep and firm voice, closely directed to the ear of her friend; "call in your resolution, and think of your wrongs, your long cherished determinations,—for you have advanced to a point from whence there is no retreat."

The Lord of Rochester, meanwhile, unused to a part of such insignificance, fully aware of his meanness, ingratitude, cruelty, and irreparable guilt, paced to and fro in lamentable agitation: at one moment on the point of putting all worldly hopes, and his immediate life to stake, by open defiance of the wretches around him, and desperate resistance to the perpetration of their horrible measures; and at another, quailing with agony at the dreaded powers of Forman, and fearful expectation of what he was to see or hear next: a state that almost bereft him of his understanding.

The sorcerer drew from beneath the table a vessel of charcoal, or some substance of that

description; placed it at a distance which seemed to require particular accuracy of measurement, from the pallid and loathsome image that was to be affected by its heat; and described upon the floor a large circle which enclosed the whole of these devilish preparations. He then approached the three associates with an air of unnatural cheerfulness—

"Nothing remains now, my friends, but to keep a strict guard upon your imaginations. Show yourselves superior to the common cast of pitiful and ignorant humanity; and as ye (the two younger at least) have been hitherto unaccustomed to these operations, be advised by me, do not conceive that a mere air of intrepidity, as if you were acting a part, and to be praised and admired for it, will stand you in stead through this process. Condescend to depart a little from the inflated ideas of your own importance, which have hitherto exalted you, and fortify yourselves by partaking of some animal refreshment."

With that he opened a door close to the spot where they stood, which had been undis-

tinguished by Rochester and the countess from the general wall of the apartment, and stamping loudly, a man entered with a supply of cold meat, wine, and spirits. The person who brought this provision seemed indisposed to advance fairly amongst the company: he cast his eyes about in every direction, varying his glances with the utmost rapidity, as if in fear of what he might behold if they remained fixed for an instant.

Having hastily spread out what he was charged with, and catching, at the same time, a glimpse of the figure in the middle of the hall, he clapped his hand before his eyes, with a shuddering exclamation that thrilled to the very hearts of the novices in these frightful proceedings. Forman, in a low voice, but with ominous look, desired the man to step aside, and led him to the remoter part of the chamber, where, by his gestures, for his voice could not be heard, it appeared that he was addressing the inferior with menaces, and stern reproof. Rochester, during this temporary inattention on the part

of the great actor in sin, remonstrated with the Lady de Lyle for having permitted, contrary to an express compact, this additional witness of their transactions.

"His presence," replied the baroness, "matters not, provided he be ignorant of your persons, which (if ever he had an opportunity of closely viewing them before) it is perfectly impossible he should recognise under your deep disguise."

The other two now rejoined them.—— Rochester regarding for some time, with apprehension and profound suspicion, every movement of the wizard, declined all solicitation to partake of the refreshment before them, 'till upon observing the Lady Essex follow the example of the others, and talk and laugh wildly in consequence, as if by such efforts she had succeeded in stifling the horrors of mind that were perpetually recurring; her paramour likewise ate a morsel or two with assumed inclination, lest his hesitation might prove offensive.

"Thou had'st better warm thee with a cup

of spirits, my friend," said the stranger who last entered, familiarly to Lord Rochester.

"I had rather not," replied the latter.

"They're right sound and good," rejoined the man, "and be seldom refused by vagram folk o' your cloth."

"What is the reason that you press me so?" said Rochester, taking the cup however, but disguising his fears under a show of irritation; "am not I at liberty to act as I please? Have you any design in thus urging me to drink?"

The man drew back dismayed, and quite forgetting himself at the other's alteration of voice and manner—

"Surely not, my lord," he replied.

Lord Rochester started, and the goblet dropped from his hand! The other looked round in the utmost consternation.

He caught the eye of Forman, who stood viewing him with a very peculiar aspect.

"How's this?" cried the sorcerer.—"Leave us, blunderer! Impracticable ideot that thou art—begone!"

The man's eyes glistened at this command, or rather permission, and in less than a second he had disappeared, without venturing on one glance behind him.

"Lord Rochester," said the Lady de Lyle, "I pledge my word of honour that no inconvenience will, or possibly can arise from that man's recollection of your person; nor had he any object whatever in addressing you as he did beyond a wish to contribute to your comfort under these very unusual circumstances."

Rochester made an inclination of the head, but no reply.

"Remove yourself," said Forman, addressing his directions particularly to the baroness, "as far as is sufficient from the border of the circle. Fall back—still backwarder—'tis well."

"What is he going to do?" whispered the Lady Essex—"I don't like it—I do not, indeed."

"Courage!" cried the baroness; "all that you desire is on the point of accomplishment."

"But why," resumed the former, "will he

not light the flame, if that be necessary, himself?—and without this fearful and mysterious ceremony?"

"It would not avail him," said her ally.—"It must be done by another power, to have the intended effect."

"Gracious mercy!" said Rochester to himself, with a heartfelt sigh; what is to be the end of it all—into what a gulf of horror has she plunged me!"

By the faint light of the lamp, from which they were now at a considerable distance, and which dimly glimmered upon the circle where the necromancer was arranging his diabolical process, they discerned, though imperfectly, all that now ensued. Forman moved repeatedly round the space that had been described upon the floor, saying some words at intervals, but not in a marked or impressive manner, and occasionally crossed in haste through the midst of the circle. He then produced a vessel filled with some liquid; (the alarmed imaginations of Rochester and his mistress suggested it to be blood,) poured it

upon the pavement, and sprinkled much more of it on all sides around him.

The wind, which, up to this moment, had howled and blustered, so that at times they could scarce hear themselves speak, and which they had felt driving in upon them from every direction, now fell at once, and the most entire stillness followed. The Lady Essex cast her eyes upon Rochester —

" How deadly pale he looks!" said she to the baroness.

" Do you think so?" returned the latter. " In my mind you both bear up with excellent resolution."

The wizard now appeared provided with a large open volume; but how he possessed himself of it, they could not, or did not observe. He read therein aloud. The words were unintelligible to these astonished and terrified young persons, but his tone was completely changed from the low confused murmuring they had heard before, and he delivered himself with a firm, clear, and commanding pronunciation. He paused.——

A light and lambent flame shot from the ground immediately before his feet, and rising towards the vaulted roof, disappeared. At that moment the hangings of the apartment were violently agitated, and a rustling sound, like the gathering together of multitudes, was heard from without the building around the doors, walls, and windows; yet the wind continued perfectly quiet, and the atmosphere became so close as to induce a sensation of faintness.

"If ever you can hope for forgiveness," said Rochester, violently clasping the arm of the baroness, "stop him, make him desist from these dreadful, these wicked —— Think upon the poor deluded creature who now leans upon your breast, whom you have called your friend."

"For shame!" cried the abandoned woman; "she will despise you. Take example, man, from her intrepidity:" then turning to the lady—"You have no foolish fears, my love?"

"Not at all: oh, no—none whatever," replied the latter, with an hysterical laugh.

The sorcerer again read aloud; then, throwing himself suddenly upon his knees, he repeatedly bowed his forehead to the ground, and hurried from beyond the limit of the circle.

A vivid blaze filled the chamber for an instant, completely dazzling the eyes of the beholders, and was succeeded by utter darkness, their own lamp even being extinguished. A deep, hoarse sound then proceeded (as it should seem) from beneath the floor, which gradually became more awful, and increased to the roar of thunder, while the quivering flame that now again hovered over the circle threw a partial gleam to the extremity of the hall. Soon, in the very centre of the unhallowed space, a vapour appeared to be collecting, which quickly swelled to a black mist or cloud.

From the midst of this portentous gloom a gigantic arm was seen extended, and in the next moment something resembling a human face, but of a character that we do not attempt to describe, grinned grimly amid the surrounding darkness.

"Hold!" cried the Baroness de Lyle; "this unhappy child is dying! She is in the very last degree of danger! See! she falls! she is lost!"

The Lady Essex had sunk into the other's arms in strong and frightful convulsions, and now dropped upon the pavement, to all appearance — a corpse.

"Curse on that miserable fool!" said Forman: "I knew this would happen."

Meanwhile Rochester, insensible to the exclamations of either — insensible to the state of his mistress—stood with his whole faculties concentrated, if he at all retained the possession of them, and gazing upon the spectre; which was now discerned for an instant, now concealed again by the thick cloud.

"We cannot proceed," said the baroness to her coadjutor: "the child must be assisted. Abandon the attempt for this time: interrupt no longer the course of nature."

"That may exceed my power," returned the wizard, sullenly: "he will not be com-

manded. All I can effect is to retain this dread angel within the circle. If the bounds be once transgressed, by the lord of hell! our destruction is inevitable!"

"For what hast thou disturbed me?" said an unusual voice, which, to the latest hour of his life, was never afterwards out of Rochester's ears. Without directly answering, the wizard prostrated himself before the fiend, and again, with the vehemence of the most earnest supplication, pronounced some words from the volume in his hand, accompanying them with gestures of worship and adoration. He then broke off, and watched the cloud within the magical space. It remained stationary; but no form or countenance was at that time perceptible.

Forman, uttering a deep and heavy groan, once more bowed himself to the earth; and with a hideous yell, followed by such a crash, as if the mightiest human structure had crumbled to its foundations, the apparition vanished into air; and they found themselves in the apartment as before, with the solitary

lamp again burning, the pallid figure of Overbury untouched, no marks whatever of the liquid that had been so profusely sprinkled, or the slightest vestige even of the spell-bound circle.

Lord Rochester, in some measure revived, and now capable, to a certain degree, of exerting his faculties and observation, perceived the baroness hanging over the object of his affections; and with his additional aid the unhappy and misguided young creature opened her eyes, and wept profusely, but seemed to have no clear idea where she was, or what had occurred.

"She will shortly recover now," observed the baroness.

"I trust she will," cried Rochester. "Look up, my Frances! my best and only beloved! for whom I have ventured amid the infernal powers, and for whose lovely sake ——"

"She cannot remain here," said Forman, harshly stopping him. "This abortive and contemptible trifling is your work, Mary de Lyle. Now attend to me: I will have no-

thing to do henceforward with the projects of these young persons. Let them proceed by their own devices. Well know I the rancour of their hearts : this work will be accomplished yet, but by more ordinary means, and more insignificant instruments. Nor after the completion of their malice will their own ruin and disgrace be long delayed."

With these words he flung indignantly from the apartment; and the wretched countess, whose agonies of terror returned with her returning senses, became as urgent to quit the place as the others were to remove her. She was supported in Rochester's arms upon the same horse that brought them. And tne animal, snuffing the morning air, went freely over hill, vale, bad tracks, or no tracks at all, as if rejoiced at turning his back upon that den of horrors.

CHAPTER XII.

Towards the end of September the young Lord Mondomer found things irksome, and himself dejected at his own seat; and as no opening appeared probable for a renewal of his intercourse with the family at Belton, he meditated upon various schemes of occupation, which were to demonstrate to the world in general that he was not a mere romantic and visionary character, but a really active, able, and vigorous minded young man; and to prove to those friends in particular, by whom he conceived himself capriciously and most unkindly treated, that his spirit was not so soon to be depressed by their unaccountable ill-usage. On revolving these subjects in his mind, it was first settled that he should take as decided and effective a part as circumstances at that time of day admitted of, in public affairs. Then he was to make the tour of Europe, seeing, hearing, discovering, and

comprehending more than any traveller of his own, or perhaps any age had done before him; and return to his own country, the model of a finished gentleman; with morals untainted, taste established, and in possession of every desirable accomplishment.

However, before he could finally resolve to turn his back upon England, and all it contained, for a series of years, he bethought him that a suitable prelude to this grand undertaking would be a journey to the metropolis, for the purpose of settling some affairs, which though below the dignity of this history to mention in detail, were nevertheless indispensable. With an ample retinue he set out from Mondomer Castle on the twenty-fifth of September, and having some business at York that demanded the halt of a day or two, he did not resume his journey from that town till the morning of the thirtieth; which it may be recollected was the same day when the Lord Rochester and his paramour, before the sun had risen, returned from the scene of their black and nefarious machinations.

The host of the inn where he had taken up his quarters, held his horse while Hugh mounted, amid the gaze and salutations of my landlady, her sisters, and several of her gossips, with all the under-strappers, both male and female, of the establishment, besides idlers in the town, who were collected to witness the grand cavalcade and departure of the young and handsome Lord Mondomer, a principal grandee of the north.

"That's he! that's he, now getting up!" said the landlady softly to one of her cronies.

"A fine figure of a youth indeed!" replied the other.

"Aye, aye," said a third; "that's what I call a nobleman now. That's the way a lord should get a-horseback; none o' your crippled, old rheumatize—But, dame, I say, he's just come to's title and forten, arn't he?"

"Is he not, my girl?" returned the hostess. "And who but he going up to kiss their majesties ——"

"Come, come, Dame Wintersloe," cried one of the coterie, "I know better than that,

howsumever; lord as he be, he no more dare take them liberties than ——"

"Their majesties' hands, you great goose, I was a-going to say, which is the form o' the thing when a lad's uncle's dead, and he a peer o' the realm; and I think we of the first house out o' sight, in the city o' York, should understand such matters a little."

"My goodness!" said one of her sisters, "how I should but like to hear him talk."

"Follow me then," cried the landlady, moving forwards with an important swing; for she being a lively, notable, and vastly well-looking woman, was a general favourite, amongst the men at least, and nothing was ever taken amiss that she did or said. When Hugh saw her approaching he waved his hand with a smile.

"And how might you sleep last night, Mistress Wintersloe?" said he: "were you disturbed as well as the rest of us?"

"Heaven preserve us, my lord, from such a night again!" cried the hostess. "Sleep, quotha! none but the dead, I believe, could

do that, your lordship: and from what they say about the country, I question whether some of them warn't awake and stirring! His holy grace be with us! But cert'n sure am I that many and many trembled in their beds between twelve at midnight and four this morning. 'Tisn't all mankind that's blest wi' such a clear conscience as, I make no doubt, your lordship enjoys."

"I am glad you've so favourable an opinion of me, Mistress Wintersloe: it was indeed an awful tempest."

"And portends no good, I fear," said the hostess, "over and above the evil that it hath already done. Oh, my, Lord Mondomer! your lordship must have taken notice of our orchard on the bank of that little hill as you come into the town from the north-west: the bank's very steep; and its an odd enough place for an orchard to be sure; but at one time ——"

"No mischief done there, I hope," said Hugh, who dreaded the circumstantial turn her conversation was taking.

"Not a trunk standing, my lord, that's as high as this post!"

"Nay, now you overdo the thing indeed," said her husband: "'twould be no laughing matter for us, if 'twere all as you say; but six or seven as regular bearing, serviceable trees as your lordship ever set eyes on, are torn up sheer. And as for the night, all I can say is, that man or boy, in England or out on't, at land or at sea, (and many's the fearful night I ha' paced the deck in, with old Frobisher, my lord), this beats every thing ever I see."

"Is all prepared?" cried Mondomer, looking round upon his train. "A good day to you, Wintersloe; to you also dame; and may none of your losses hereafter be more formidable than this in the orchard."

"Heaven prosper your lordship!" replied one and all, as he quitted that established house of entertainment in York city, which of late years has resumed its ancient appellation of Hostell.

Many signs of devastation struck our hero upon his route. Deep trenches were formed

in the roads by the water's forcing a passage; a groupe of peasants were examining a gigantic elm, which seemed to have been blasted by lightning in a very remarkable manner; and in several places, large trees completely uprooted, had stretched so entirely across the way in their fall, that for all wheel-carriages it must, during many hours, have proved utterly impracticable. They had now passed the Went, and now the Don; and at Barnby, upon the latter stream, being overtaken by a long and heavy shower, they took that opportunity to give the horses some refreshment; not to mention my lord's attendants themselves, who, as well here as wherever they had baited before, thought it conducive to their master's honor that the beasts should not be kept in heart alone. Hugh was ushered into the only place they called a sitting room in the whole house; it being a small portion of the kitchen divided off from the rest by so frail a partition, that it was nearly impossible for him to lose one syllable of the discourse that took place behind the

scenes during his sojourn there, and which remarks were indulged in by three fellows whom, in his passage to this splendid saloon, he had observed sitting at one corner of the dresser, with a huge brown loaf, cheese, and liquor before them.

At Lord Mondomer's approach one of the party stood up; and the others seemed doubtful whether they should follow this courteous example: with the sturdiness, however, of Englishmen, even early in the seventeenth century, they decided in the negative. A servant of Hugh's now came into the kitchen, to hasten their own supply, which was to be discussed in the porch.

"So you've been beforehand with us in this cheese, I see," said he, addressing himself to the men just mentioned.

"Never thee mind that," returned one of the party; "hast got the best on't now, man. Why, the heel of a cheese be worth all the other over and over again."

"How much further," inquired the landlord, "does your master mean to get to-night?"

"Oh, but a little ways now," replied Mondomer's attendant; and taking what he was in quest of, he returned to his fellow-servants.

"His master go on to-night!" continued the fellow who had spoken before; "be that your question?"

"Aye," said the landlord, "to be sure 'tis. Why shouldn't I ask 'un?"

"Now if I'd a mind," returned the other, "I could tell thee who his master be. Why, Gaffer Dobbs, this be nobody else but Sir Hugh Mondomer as was; and that I'll take my oath on."

"Wush — wush!" said Dobbs, screwing up one side of his face; winking at the same time till he brought his eye in contact with his upper lip, and pointing backwards with his thumb over his right shoulder, towards the partition; then proceeding in what he imagined to be a discreet tone, but which was just as audible as the former. "Aha! be this the young spark then as is just comed into they great Northumberland and Yorkshire esteates, besides the Lord knows what over all England

besides? And he's my lord too now, as I'm a thinking. You ha' seen 'un before I warrant, at Shotton — Sheraton — whatever you call it."

"Not I," answered the man; adding something which Hugh, who by no means favoured this opportunity of hearing himself talked over, could not at all distinguish. After the fellow had muttered on at some length, the host, whose voice was by far the most powerful and unmanageable, exclaimed, "No! did ye faith? Wounds! I ha' heard o' such dogs, but never seed only one in my life, and that was a woman: in the shape o' one howsever. And father, when I were a wee bit of a boy, took me cross the country, and we seed her burnt at the stake, at a place betwixt Elden Hill and Gundleford Bridge. And as we was a going home again, my stars! what a rumpus wi' thunder and hail and that among the hills."

"Not worse than last night, I'll answer for't," said a third voice.

"What! you had it too in your parts?"

said the master of the house. "Nay, by the rood, I doubt whether 'twas up to last night's indeed."

"In our parts!" cried the former: "'twas felt all over the north of England, mun, far and near. I ha' seen a traveller, as left Sowerby afore day, and he says that in Huddersfield, and thereabout, there's scarce a house but what's lost its chimneys, besides stacks blown over, and the plague knows what: and great part o' the old church tower came toppling down, wi' such a deuce of a smash, upon the tombstones. Odd, 'twas well it happened afore folk was about."

"And we," said the first spokesman, "was for starting from Wetherby between two and three, just in the very middle on't, warn't us, Dick? And, as I hope to be saved, there was no getting the horses on, no how; and so we stopped till it all hushed up."

"Aye, indeed! that was the queerest part on't," cried out several altogether.

"The whole hushed up, I say," added the former speaker, "at once; sudden-like, just

as you'd stop a mill-wheel. The country was roused from one end to t'other. Three o' the Ripon lads comed in afore we set off, and, according to their story, all up by Greta Bridge, Bernard Castle, and there — they thought 'twere the day of judgment! and through the thick black clouds, all the while o' the storm, a star were seen over towards the Solway Firth, much bigger than any common one, and as red as blood."

Now they had fairly embarked upon these wonders, there is no saying to what length the conversation might have extended, had not our hero presented himself in the kitchen, and acquainted mine host with his opinion that it was full time to depart.

"What now, my lord? Surely, my lord — All will be ready in less than half a minute, your honour." And away brushed Dobbs towards the gentry in the porch, who, notwithstanding that the rain had totally gone off, were too busily employed to make any observation upon that event, and wanted some such intimation to bring it to their recollection

that they had not put up for the evening. Before he left the kitchen, Lord Mondomer looked towards the men whom he had heard conversing; and the same person who paid him the attention of rising from his seat when he first passed through, now made him a low bow.

"You seem to recollect me, my friend," said Hugh.

"I ha' seen you just once in my life before, my lord."

"That's highly possible; but I don't remember your features."

"Do you call to mind, please ye, my lord, one evening in the beginning of August last, when you fell in among the thickets near Cromford wi' a certain ——"

"Oh, I comprehend," cried Mondomer; "you served the Lord Essex at that time, I presume?"

"And do still, your lordship."

Hugh inquired after his lord's welfare, &c. and the man made the expected answers.

Mondomer was then on the point of

quitting the house, when the other, with considerable embarrassment of manner, again addressed him.

" I — I — am going, mayhap, to use too great a freedom, my Lord Mondomer; and not it may be — a proper thing after all, for one as is in my situation: but when one's in doubt, you know, sir, if one thinks upon the whole, a thing's one's duty, you know ——"

" I am perfectly ready, my friend," said Hugh, " to hear whatever you may be inclined to say; but really there's no time for long prefaces. Have you, in truth, any thing to tell me?"

" Yes, my lord, I certainly should like to say somewhat — I should. Will your honor be pleased to turn into that there room again for a moment? I won't be long."

" If you wish," returned Hugh, " to talk to me in private, I have some reason to think that place will not suit your purpose. Walk on a little upon the road here." And making a signal to his people not to follow, he proceeded with the man completely out of their

hearing; and left his own servants, Goodman Dobbs, and the other fellows who had been regaling themselves, in utter astonishment, and racked with the not very delicious sensation of burning curiosity that was never likely to be gratified. The host indeed, suffered least, as he made scarce any doubt but that, when the others were gone, at the expense of treating this retainer of the Earl of Essex with what he had already taken, and one, or at the utmost two quarts of ale in addition, he should get out of him the whole secret, be it ever so momentous.

"My name, my lord," said the man, who had composed himself as they walked on, "is Ralph Whitburne; and, as you know already, sir, I was with my lord of Essex when we give chase to that imp o' Satan, as you, I understand, my lord, cut down to the ground."

"Ralph — Ralph," observed Hugh, pondering upon the name. "In what capacity do you serve your lord?"

"I was one o' his lordship's people in the

sporting line since I been eleven years old, sir; and now I'm head-falconer and game-keeper."

"I thought so," replied Mondomer: "your lord made favourable mention of you. It was not your fault, I fancy, that the person they were in pursuit of escaped from their hands."

"I did what I could, your lordship; but he's not so easily laid hold on. I wasn't so busy in that there kitchen but now," continued he, looking Hugh full in the face; "but I ha' taken notice o' all your lordship's followers, every one on 'em; and that man as you had with you on the night we was talking about, ben't among 'em to-day."

"He is not," said Mondomer; "and what of that?"

"Why, I'd be sorry to do an injury to any living soul," added Ralph, "and much more a fellow-servant: for what is it, my lord? Those in the same line o' life should ha' a fellow-feeling for one another; and that made me hesitate, what ye call it, at first: but I made up my mind now. Pray, my lord, was

that man, whom I well remember ye called Ned, a very great coward indeed?"

"I never thought so," replied Lord Mondomer: "he had as much courage as another, for any thing I ever saw; and there have been occasions when he proved himself a good bold fellow."

"If I may make so free, your lordship," said the falconer; "was he o' much service in that struggle as you had in the wood there?"

"I don't know that he was: but what's your object in all this, my man?"

"I ask your pardon, sir: and will your lordship please to tell me how it comed that he were not o' service?"

"Because, since you must know, he did not get up at the time: some accident, I think, had happened to his horse, which delayed him."

"Oh, it did!" replied the game-keeper. "In a word, my Lord Mondomer, it always seemed wonderful odd and unaccountable to me that he should let that fellow off, when he

lay wounded upon the ground, and he (the man Ned I mean) wi' arms in his hand, or at least about 'un."

"It was excessively stupid and provoking, I grant you," said Lord Mondomer; "but you heard his account of it, I imagine, when you were all together afterwards."

"Aye, my lord, aye; I heard that, sure enough."

"And do you doubt it?" inquired Hugh. "What is it you would suggest?"

"It be far too bold for one the like o' me," returned Ralph, "to keep going on in this way, not answering your lordship straight and direct; but I can't help it. I be sorry to be wearisome; but before I speak to that, I must indeed ask your honour one question more; which is this — does that same Ned, that man, live on wi' you at present, my lord?"

"No," replied Hugh, "he has left me this month or more."

"And would you, my lord, do him any good as lay in your way? And to be sure your honour must ha' the power to do it."

"I certainly would," cried Hugh: "he was long in my service; and I am well disposed to assist him in any way that I can."

"Then," replied the falconer, "I must beg your lordship's pardon ten thousand times for all this trouble and goodness in listening to me; but — but — I don't mean to say any thing more about the matter."

"How's this, sir?" said Hugh, rather warmly. "Your conduct is very strange: did I solicit you to make any communication? What do you detain me in this absurd manner for?"

"Don't ye be angry, my good lord; for this be the real and whole truth on't. I ha' seen that man in bad company since we met; and if so be he had yet lived along wi' your lordship, it might like enough be right to give your honour a hint as to what's dangerous, and suspicious, and all that. But since he be off, why I don't know, but it seems somehow that its no business o' mine. After all, I knows nothing absolute against 'un: not positive you see. Ah, many a one's led into

ill company at times by accident, or one thing or another;' and doesn't go all lengths with 'em, my lord."

"That's true enough," replied Mondomer; "and the conclusion is, I suppose, that whatever you may conjecture, I am to hear nothing more. I wish the man well; and as I shall never probably see him again, feel very little inclination to inquire into any thing to his prejudice. I have no doubt, my friend, you intended to be of use to me; and thank you kindly."

Then, adding some civil message to the earl his master, Hugh returned to his own people, and set forward at their head.

CHAP. XIII.

They halted at Rotherham for the night; and as they passed into the court-yard of the only inn in the place, the landlord, with dismal countenance, advanced to announce that his house was already crowded; but that an excellent sleeping apartment happened to be vacant, which, if the noble cavalier would be pleased to wait something less than five minutes, would be made completely ready for his reception.

This offer was acceded to after an attempt at fuss and bluster on the part of some of his train, which Hugh discouraged in the most peremptory manner. With respect to mine host's account, there was only one little inaccuracy in it; the substitution, namely, of the words, "now vacant," in lieu of, occupied by no less than six females of his own household; who, in an inconceivably short space of time, contrived to clear off and abandon the

premises, with every thing down to the minutest article that could have intimated their being in the constant habit of sitting, dressing, working, and sleeping there. Lord Mondomer was accordingly ushered into this uncomfortable and ill-furnished, but sufficiently spacious chamber, by both host and hostess. The latter, to whom his quality was now well known, simpering, grinning, my lording, and apologizing, till even her husband thought she would go beyond the mark. Hugh having eaten nothing at all since a very early hour in the morning, now ordered a substantial supper as soon as it could be got ready. Long, however, before the warmest imagination could have anticipated that desirable event, my landlady again invaded him, with information that there was a most delightful gentleman below, upon whose merits she ran off with such happy fluency of language, as made ample amends for any inaccuracy, and wandered into such beautiful excursions, that it was perhaps very bad taste in our hero to bring her back doggedly to the point, no less

than three different times. It at last appeared, however, that my Lord Alfreton was in possession of the best of two sitting rooms which the inn afforded; and that he would, if so unceremonious an invitation might be excused, be happy in the honor of Lord Mondomer's company at supper. This overture for an acquaintance, my landlady added, she had foreseen from the moment Lord Mondomer alighted; and that, as it was impossible he could decline it, she had already taken the liberty to add what the latter had ordered to Lord Alfreton's repast: for it would be the saddest thing in nature (so she was pleased to express herself) if two such charming young noblemen should not pass the evening together. Hugh, perceiving that the good woman had followed up her opinion on the subject by such steps as put it quite out of his power to reject this courtesy, sent an answer of much politeness, acquiescing in the arrangement.

Perhaps he would rather have been left

alone, as he had no personal knowledge of Lord Alfreton; but several of that family he had occasionally met, and of the eldest son and all of them he was in the habit of hearing a good deal. In reality, the odd thing was, that, with his habits, the other should have proposed it; for nobody living could be less prone to the infirmity of quarrelling with his own thoughts, and the consequent dependence upon society (any sort of society whatever) to escape solitude, which one so frequently observes amongst mankind.

The only way in which we are able to account for this unusual step is as follows. The youth's head was, according to custom, full of Belton, and every thing belonging to it, and his own future felicity in close connexion therewith. Owing to this predominant feeling he had sustained great disgust, for the last two days, on a visit he had been compelled to perform at Froddingham, in Lincolnshire; from whence having escaped that morning, and being on his way to his father's principal

seat in the west; his attention was first attracted by the bustle in the inn-yard, and soon firmly fixed by hearing who had arrived. Now the Mondomers and Harlandes were associated together by every body; that name, therefore, raised his spirits at once; and a jumble of very agreeable ideas came across his mind — such as mutual friends, topics in common, recommendiug himself to one in intimacy with them, and his fill of talk about Blanche to an agreeable and ready listener. The hostess was consequently summoned, and being questioned upon the point of Hugh's accommodations, she easily put things in train, as we have seen. The meeting of these youths gave each a favourable impression of the other; and after reciprocal inquiries as to which way they were travelling, &c. without much attention to the answers on either side, Hugh mentioned the storm of the preceding night, and talked of the conversation that he had overheard at Barnby, upon the Don.

"The common people are so enraptured with the marvellous," continued he, who loved

it to the full as well as any of them, "that one can never entirely rely upon their narrative of any prodigy; but that all nature was in some uncommon agitation seems unquestionable. Did it extend, my Lord Alfreton, to where you were residing in the north of Lincolnshire?"

"Not in the degree you speak of," said the other, even more interested by the sort of topic than Mondomer himself. "It did not awaken me. Still, however, there was uproar enough to frighten the women and children pretty considerably, and I found people full of it in the morning. It appears to have come on from the northward, and is, I dare to say, ominous."

"What, because it proceeds from that quarter rather than any other?" said Hugh.

"To be sure," replied Lord Alfreton; "are not you aware that among the mountains of Scotland there is a description of beings fearfully different from the ordinary race of mankind. They never leave their native hills, but have such an insight into the operations of

nature; that many, perhaps most, of the great calamities of Europe have taken their origin from thence. For it is an undoubted fact, that when any living creature upon this earth possesses, or acquires, a power above the common distribution to the human species, that power is invariably exerted in evil."

"Knowledge does indeed often become a great source of temptation," observed Hugh; "but there seems no reason why the inhabitants of the higher regions of the globe should be exposed to it in particular."

"Reason!—No," said the other; "nor can we give any reason why men's faculties in the common way should differ one from another; or why certain nations should be more brave, wise, and powerful than the rest,—but so it is, nevertheless. Well, in the mountainous parts of Scotland then, there is no question but that communications respecting futurity, (either impressed upon the mind, or vision) are not unfrequently made to mankind.—Mankind, observe, I say; for we do not now talk of

your elves, hobgoblins, and fairies, which are of an order totally distinct."

"Some have denied their existence altogether," said Hugh, "but with sufficient presumption, as it appears to me: for a young lady—a——a——" here some unpleasant thought seemed to intervene;—"a person of my acquaintance, as she was returning home, when a child, attended by one of her father's maidens,—it was late in the evening, and the moon had risen, you understand——"

"Go on," cried Lionel, eagerly. "I can guess, I think, who the young lady was,—one of a most exquisitely charming family! any of whom are likely to be favoured by the fairy tribe,—to be guarded and beloved by those little gentle beings!"

"Hey-day! how's this?" said Hugh, staring. "Nay, my lord, your penetration is more extraordinary, in my mind, than that even of those Scottish mountaineers you were speaking of. I no sooner mention that there is in the world a lady of my acquaintance,

than you know by intuition, not only who she is, and all her relations, but how they are likely to stand in the opinion of the fairies!"

"Come now, my good lord," said Lionel, "if it is not impertinent, will you allow me to declare her name, and assure me, fairly, whether I am right or wrong?"

Oh! nonsense, nonsense," returned Mondomer, blushing up to the eyes, and careful not to appear so much annoyed as for various reasons he really was. "I was talking of a mere child, as then she must have been."

"Well, but, if I musn't ask any questions," said the other, who, in his turn, did not quite like this hesitation,—"pray let me have, at any rate, the rest of the adventure."—

"Oh, I don't know," replied Hugh. "I forget it, almost. One of those rings upon the moor,—those particular rings upon the turf, you know, that look so green by day, shone with brilliant crimson, I think; and——and something, as far as I recollect, of little delicate figures, not half a foot high, with bright plumes, and flags in their hands; that

glittered like silver—but 'tis all gone out of my head."

"Now, I'm sorry for that," said Alfreton; "for I should like to hear every single circumstance belonging to it. My delight is to be raised beyond this world. I pant for an intercourse with the free inhabitants of air, ocean, or subterraneous cavern, and almost adore any body who can participate in my sensations! Nobody's conversation, I assure you, my lord, without flattery,—no man's, at least, has given me such pleasure as yours this evening, for longer than I can remember. I understand you. I'm positive I do. You detest, like myself, the heavy, monotonous, unattractive transactions of common life. This sort of interruption, now, you abominate."

"I am not so clear of that," cried Hugh, laughing, as the landlord entered with a banging great roast goose, followed by his wife with something else to the full as substantial.

And, to say the truth, Lord Alfreton's ethereal tone was likewise relaxed upon this occasion; for, having met with some wine

extremely to their mind, which they indulged in, not intemperately, but pretty liberally; our young friends seemed to think this world would do tolerably well, and the mutual interest of their discourse increased. Indeed, as, notwithstanding Lionel's hyperbolical mode of expressing himself, these youths did most certainly suit exceedingly well, they grew more and more pleased with each other every instant.

"You told me, I think," said Alfreton, "that you were not pressed by any necessity of getting to London at a particular moment?"

"Certainly not," replied Hugh.

"Then why," resumed the former, "should we not proceed together? By making a circuit through part of Derbyshire with me, in my way to the border of North Wales, you will avoid the most uninteresting road under the sun, and pass through some very striking scenery in its place, which we shall both enjoy the more from seeing it in each other's company."

"By all means," said Mondomer; "and

as you are probably well acquainted with the country, I shall trust to you for letting me know at what point we should separate, and I bear away to the southward again, which necessity I shall heartily lament, whenever it happens."

"I parted, my Lord Mondomer," said Lionel, "from some very peculiar friends of yours, about a week ago—some friends in the North."

Hugh looked earnestly upon him, making an inclination of the head, but no reply.

"Of course," added the former, "you must be aware whom I mean?"

Another bow.

"How finely situated the old gentleman's mansion is! Not, perhaps, what would be regularly called beautiful, but all in character, somehow, inside and out, with his frank, honest hospitality, and good humour, hey?"

"Very much so," said Hugh, twisting about upon his seat.

"If any man," proceeded Alfreton, "could rise superior to the selfish scheming established

in society now a-days; if he could look upon matrimony as something more than a mere step in the ladder of ambition; and, in short, wanted nothing but a nice, good, and lovely wife alone, Belton's the place, my dear friend, if you'll allow me to call you so,—there's the very place."

"To be sure," said Hugh, speaking with his teeth upon his under lip, which he pressed pretty hard; "to be sure it is. Do you know, I've been thinking over what you said as to the occult knowledge being most frequent in wild and mountainous districts; and I'll tell you another instance much to your purpose, and in this island too."

"They are heavenly girls, the daughters," continued Lionel, who hadn't attended to a word the other said; "and when I say the daughters in general, no doubt every one must admit that——"

"Wales was, and I dare say is, precisely the same as Scotland, with respect to abstruse sciences," added Mondomer, raising his voice.

"The eldest, that bewitching creature,

Blanche!" said Alfreton, persevering, "is just in the same proportion superior to the others as——"

"What d'ye say to Owen Glendower?" shouted Hugh.

"Owen Glendower!" said Lionel, overpowered at last; "what has he to do with her?—Oh! aye, true—a magician, hey!—You said something about Wales, I think,—yes, yes, I allow he was: but can you possibly let your thoughts range to any thing else when one is talking of the Belton nymphs, and you, so much more intimate there (at least you must formerly have been so), than myself even?"

"The fact is, my good lord," said Hugh, more disconcerted with that last remark than all the rest put together, "that I had little or no sleep last night; and I almost doubt whether the most excruciating torments that ever tyrant invented, could keep my attention steady to any one subject of discourse for five minutes longer."

"Nay, then," replied the other with a

smile, and rising from his seat; "I am sure that my talents must be unequal to it.— Refreshing slumbers to you, and (what are better, nine times out of ten, than any realities) delightful dreams."

"I shall be at your service, my Lord Alfreton, to-morrow, at whatever hour you best like," said Hugh.—"Thank you over and over again for your kindness and accommodation."

With these words our hero left him, and, notwithstanding the want of sleep, of which, with much truth, he had complained, Hugh was far from indulging in that luxury for a considerable time after he had retired to bed. He felt discomposed and agitated at Lord Alfreton's unqualified admiration of Blanche Harlande;—for that she was distinguished from the other sisters he had collected very decisively: and he magnified its probable consequences with all a lover's faculty for making himself uneasy. Then Hugh was as little of a coxcomb as a youth in his great situation could possibly be: he admitted, without the

minutest reservation, the agreeable qualities and advantages of Lord Alfreton, and considered him certainly as an alarming rival. Not that he would have entertained the shadow of apprehension, had matters remained in the same state between him and that family, as when he left them in June; for, without any overweening opinion of himself, he placed the most entire and satisfactory reliance upon Blanche; and of her affections he had from her own mouth been assured. But, unfortunately, things were sadly different, indeed; all was dark and unpromising. They had neglected him without any assigned cause; despised his efforts at explanation; avoided him when they well knew he was so near them; and upon one occasion, where some intercourse became inevitable, part of the family (for Blanche seemed scrupulously to shun all chance of their meeting) had treated him with studied harshness and contumely.

To relieve such painful reflections, this well disposed young man endeavoured to

work himself up to an acquiescence in what he conceived might be the will of Providence against his union with the object of his hopes and tenderness: and in that case he concluded (and tried to wish it) that she might live very fairly happy with Lord Alfreton, who would advance her to a condition which she was in every respect qualified to render useful, and adorn. For these efforts at laudable resignation (though in candour we are obliged to say they were not altogether successful) he was, however, rewarded by profound, comfortable, and renovating repose.

After breakfast next morning, these new allies were sauntering together, arm in arm, before the door of the inn, in expectation of their servants and horses, when Mondomer received a touch upon the shoulder from behind. On turning round, a decently habited, grave looking gentleman, in riding attire, and completely armed, observed, with a civil salutation—

"Your lordship's glove, I rather believe."

Hugh immediately perceived, that of two gloves which he held in his right hand when they began to walk, one had accidentally dropped from him.

"Much beholden to you, I thank you, sir," said he, taking the glove.

"Your lordships are proceeding straight for the metropolis, I presume," added the man.

"Not by the direct road," said Lord Mondomer.

"You will excuse me, my lord," resumed the stranger, "if I suggest that the way through Newark, Huntingdonshire, and so on to Hertfordshire, is beyond comparison the best, and most frequented.—"

"We are fully aware of that, sir," said Hugh; "but suppose we should have a fancy for a more obscure road, and care little for the inconveniences that may belong to it?"

"In that event," replied the other coolly, "you will do well to deviate; I merely mention the circumstance, because, with a large train of attendants, your lordships may be put

to more difficulty than you seem apprized of, by taking a midland direction.—I hope I have given no offence."

"By no means, sir; how can you suppose it?" cried one after the other.

"Then your lordships' body of followers is, in fact, a considerable one?" continued the man.

The youths looked at each other in amazement at this strange pertinacity; which the stranger observing, asked no more questions, and bowing, withdrew.

"A good morning to your lordships," squalled out the hostess, who made her appearance much about this time.—"So you're journeying on together. Well, I knew 'twould be so. When once these young cavaliers have met, (says I last night) the odds are fifty to one but——"

"My good lady," said Alfreton, "did you observe the person that was talking to us as you came into the porch?"

"No, not I,—not in particular, my lord. Who was he?"

"That's just what we want to know; he

seems to be extremely anxious for our safe journey, which is the more obliging, as we should never have dreamt of troubling our heads about his.—"

"Humph!—but that's queer, though," returned the landlady; "he meddle and make with your honours' journey!—let's see—was that the man?"—pointing to one at a small distance off, who appeared to derive considerable amusement (or interest of some sort) in the gathering together of their cavalry. They both assured her it was.

"Of all the folks that frequent the Queen's Head," replied she, "and there's not a soul of any note in the North but we see 'em at times, that gentleman is the one, the only one, I can give no account of. He behaves himself civil, and pays as he goes; but, betwixt me and your lordships, I don't care how little we're favoured with his company for the future. To be poking about into other people's concerns, without any decent acquaintance of his own, (for he's always by himself) seems uncreditable, somehow."

She was here called away by a new arrival: and our young friends, whose curiosity was awakened by what she had thrown out, continued to watch the stranger till all was ready for their departure. While Mondomer was engaged in giving directions, Lionel took the master of the house a few steps aside.

"Can you inform me," said his lordship, "who that person is by the stable door?"

"Which person, my lord?"

"There; I can't point; but that man with his hat in his hand, smoothing down the feather."

"I doubt your lordship can't know much of him?"

"Then you must be the less surprised at the question I ask you.—Who is he?"

"I am not certain, my lord, what his name is."

"Is there any reason why you should feel disinclined to tell me?"

"Upon my credit, as a fair dealing and honest man, I cannot tell who he is."

"My only motive for inquiring," replied Alfreton, "is because your wife intimated that he was something of a doubtful character; and he has, in an odd enough sort of way, been inquisitive as to the route of Lord Mondomer and myself."

"Then my dame is a foolish, officious, old woman," returned mine host. "She knows nothing about him whatever, and that I am ready to take my bodily oath on. Now, I only leave it to your lordships to say whether folks in our line are to be passing their judgment upon good customers to the house, just because we can't, may be, explain every one single thing in the world about their quality and manner o' life.—"

"It would surely be very impertinent and foolish to do so without strong grounds of suspicion," said Lionel; "and I am to conclude from you, then, that your wife's hints were mere gossip.—"

"Nothing else in the world, your lordship," cried the landlord, as if to cut the subject

short, which (with the aid of our hero who rode up at this moment, urging his friend to mount) he thoroughly succeeded in.

The weather was dry, with a keen and bracing air, and the day beautiful. Our travellers enjoyed themselves proportionably.

"Did you ever pass between Sheffield and Rotherham by night?" said Hugh.

"By night! I rather think not," returned the other. "No—I can't recollect that I ever did."

"Full well would you remember it if you had," said Mondomer, "with your feelings and lively imagination. The glare of the furnaces from one point to another, over the whole face of the country, has a most magnificent effect. You might suppose yourself descending into the centre of the earth to the region of fire, as some imagine; or, in a still livelier degree, one's fancy is perhaps delighted by the idea of traversing a land in hourly and feverish expectation of some formidable host of invaders. In your front, as the shades of

evening thicken, you behold, perhaps, a light of an uncertain description; it soon becomes more alarming; and momentarily growing stronger and stronger, at length shines forth the fatal and unquestionable beacon fire. But the signal of danger is not from that quarter alone: another, and yet another, arises in every direction around you, till the whole heaven reddens with the blaze."

"Now all that I like," cried Lionel, rubbing his hands. "You describe the thing as if you did really enjoy it. As for people in general, my brother Edward for instance, when you're travelling with him, he just says, 'Isn't this fine?' and 'Isn't that pretty?' in the same tone that he uses when he comes to an inn, about his dinner, the sauce, or any thing of that kind; and as for the remarks of any body else, he either turns a deaf ear to them altogether, or cuts 'em down with 'Well, a tower, and what is there in that?'—or, 'Yes, to be sure, an old house—many others in the county, I'll be bound for it;' and sometimes,

'Poh! stuff! what's the moon to you? let's have no affectation.'

Hugh laughed.

"That last retort would make short work with men of our failings, Lord Alfreton, indeed. But as to affectation, I have not the slightest doubt that as much, or more, is at the bottom of certain exclusive pretensions to be men of this world, boasted of by stupid, sullen, inflexible characters,—joyless, except under the influence of gross pleasures—than belongs, for the most part, to those who have the weakness (for a weakness I fear it is) to allow their imaginations as much play as you and I do."

"I take that degree of blame," said Lionel, "as the highest compliment you can pay me. We should have known each other long before; for there is yet a subject, (one that I alluded to last night), a topic, by many many degrees the most interesting to my heart of any that this earth can furnish,—upon which I am confident we shall agree, at least as well as we have done upon all the rest. My excellent

friend, though the shortness of our acquaintance might not justify it to the common caution of mankind, there is that about you on which I can implicitly rely. To you I will, without disguise, unfold the state of my affections; by your advice my entire conduct shall be regulated; and as to your sympathy——what's the matter? You look quite ill!"

"Speak lower," said Hugh.

"Are you faint—shall we stop?" added the other.

"Have the goodness to come a little closer," cried Hugh, looking full in his companion's face, with deep dejection marked upon his own. "I strive against it, Lord Alfreton, but am very, very unhappy! To my honour as a man, and (far beyond that pledge) to my solemn word as a Christian, you may safely trust, that I will never betray your secret;—but I implore, I conjure you to tell me, and tell me quickly, whether you have contracted any engagement with Sir Giles Harlande's eldest daughter?"

"No;" returned Lionel, excessively discomposed, and stunned, as it were, at this abrupt mode of closing with the subject.

"Pardon me," continued Mondomer; "no engagement, either virtual or express?"

"None at all," replied Lionel; "she does not even know, or — or — suspect, as far as I can tell — But how, in the name of heaven, came you to find out — to be aware — to — ask me such a question?"

"I had no right to ask it," said Hugh, inexpressibly relieved, which however he endeavoured to conceal, "and must owe my excuse to your kindness alone. My dear Lord Alfreton, you have been candid and open with me; and, believe me, I feel it extremely painful to withhold any thing from you, in return, upon a matter which I plainly see has engaged your whole mind: but most unfortunately circumstances compel me so to do. You love the young lady who has just been mentioned, and would honour me by making me the confidant of that passion. I can never become so. Go on with your

addresses; persevere, and prosper. She is worthy of you: she is worthy of the most exalted character, and the most exalted station that this world can bestow! I have known—" He was going to pronounce her name, but could not. "I have lived among them all with the intimacy of—a—that is to say—from my earliest youth. Now, Lord Alfreton, if I should ever hereafter be conscious of any difficulty in—any probable obstruction to your suit, you may depend upon me, I will duly apprize you of it without the least reserve: I am now aware of none. Go on;—but in the mean-time you will oblige me infinitely by desisting from any mention, or even allusion to the Harlande family."

He ceased, in great and perceptible agitation; and his companion's ideas were so deranged, that many minutes elapsed before he could at all think of what would be the fit answer to make; or whether he should make any. Pride at last came to his aid.

"When your lordship talks," said he, "of my attachment, my addresses, and so forth,

you run on a good deal too fast. I never allowed, or meant to allow, that I had—declared—that any—that things had gone so far: nor do I now by any means say they ever will."

"As to that," said Mondomer, quietly, "you will determine it hereafter, as suits your inclinations. At any rate there is no mischief done by a partial explanation of our relative situations, which I could not resist making—I could not, believe me."

After this they rode on for a long time, each full of his own meditations. Those of my Lord Alfreton were at first any thing but satisfactory. There was something particular, that was clear, between the young Lord Mondomer, in every respect as good a match as himself, and that very one of the Harlande girls upon whom he had fixed his predilections, and (as he just at present conceived) his whole soul, and every chance of happiness.

Then Hugh was a far older friend of the family; and it was frightful to think what opportunities he might have have had of

engaging her regard! And though, to be sure, there was a something or other about himself which the generality of women must like, and which Mondomer wanted; yet the other was well-looking and gentlemanly; that, he was conscious, couldn't be denied. His lordship was likewise now rather fretted at what half an hour before had given him unmixed rapture—the circumstance, that is to say, of Hugh's being (in Alfreton's own judgment) by far the most agreeable man he had met with. To set against this gloomy side of the picture, a considerable influx of hope was admitted from the certainty that, whatever might have passed between them originally, all was at present off; as he doubted not for an instant the manly sincerity with which his companion had apprized him, that he knew of no existing impediment to Lionel's views. But how could it all be? How was it (now Hugh was perfect master of his own fortune and actions) that he did not come forward, if he had any interest in her heart? Oh, this was the state of the business! Blanche felt

all the tenderness of a sister for him; but women never fall in love, in the passionate established over head and ears way, that is, with those who have been bred up with them from infancy. Never, of course. Why didn't he think of that before? But the converse prevails as to men (Alfreton decided): they do fall in love under such circumstances, as Hugh had with Blanche, there could be no doubt of that. She had, therefore, (Lionel settled in his own mind) refused young Mondomer, with every possible assurance of pity, regard, and esteem, before his uncle's death; and now his pride wouldn't permit him to bring the thing on again; nor would that sweet, disinterested being, feel disposed to give him the least encouragement if he did. This ingenious explanation arranged every thing nicely, and restored all his good humour. Lionel now delighted in Hugh ten times more, if possible, than had been the case before; and his good will was increased by the amiable feeling of commiseration for the other's hopeless and melancholy situation. The effects, however,

he thought, of Mondomer's natural and laudable, but misplaced attachment, would wear out through time and philosophy; or rather Lionel determined they should; because, in his anticipations of bliss, it appeared scarcely less certain that Blanche was to be the lovely, elegant, and affectionate wife, than that Hugh was to figure away in constant intercourse with them, as the very model of a friend. Here we are also compelled to add, that our hero himself was by no means the worse disposed towards his fellow-traveller on account of the confession he had extorted from him, that as yet, at least, there was no harm done.

They continued, therefore, to chat as amicably and agreeably as ever, and agreed that, instead of parting at Chesterfield, which was probably the obvious point of separation, Alfreton should diverge from his strict course, and accompany his friend to Cromford, a central part of the county, where they were to pass the evening, and each pursue his own way next day. This plan of operations was completed as they descended a steep hill, with

the town of Chesterfield full in view. Here Lionel happened to look back towards their train, which followed at some distance; and his attention was apparently attracted very forcibly: he rode on, but with his head still turned over his shoulder; and Hugh, surprised at receiving no answer whatever to several of his remarks, perceived his companion making earnest endeavours to see clearly in that direction, by partially shading his eyes with his hand.

"What is it you want to make out?" said Mondomer.

"A man has joined our attendants, and been talking to them some time; and I wish I may be hanged if I don't believe 'tis the same fellow that spoke to us in the Queen's Head yard, before we set out."

Upon this they both pulled up, and turning entirely round, observed the man at the same instant leave their people, and ride, but with much composure, down a lane in a direction about due west from the spot where the others had arrived.

" As sure as you exist," cried Hugh, " 'tis he; I have not the slightest doubt of it."

Then summoning the servants around them, they inquired who he was; but could gain no further information upon that head.

" What might be his business amongst you then?" said Alfreton.

" What did he say?" cried Hugh.

" He seemed to want to know," replied one of their men, " whether your lordships was going strait on to Derby, or into Nottinghamshire; and if both went on to London."

" And what did you tell him?"

" We said, my lord, as our orders wasn't positive, but 'twere most likely your lordships would be parting company at Chesterfield; and then we should go perhaps through Derby; or perhaps the Nottingham way; or we might indeed stretch across to Newark: but I don't think, says I——"

" Well, well, I comprehend," said Hugh: " you told him all you did think, and all you did not, about it."

" Yes, my lord: and then says he to one,

my Lord Alfreton's people—(this man here 'twas)—'And which way will your party march when you've left Chesterfield?'"

"And what was the fellow's reply to your story," observed Lionel to his own follower, "after you had described our whole route, as I make not the least doubt you did?"

"I was in the middle on't, your lordship, when the gentleman cried, 'Never mind, my friend; its o' no consequence or si'nification,' or some such thing; and away he was, without listening to a syllable more."

"But you will please to take notice," said his master, "that we do not mean to part at Chesterfield, and you'll receive further orders there."

They now entered the town; and, after an ample bait, it was resolved to proceed across the country to Cromford; notwithstanding the reiterated assurances of the people belonging to the inn, that the roads, always in a bad state, were just then execrable, and every thing but totally impassable; and the vehement discouragements of the landlord himself,

whose zealous advice almost amounted to supplication, that they would prefer the Derby way, even at the inconvenience of a considerable round-about, as he expressed it. All this, however, was throwing spirits instead of water upon the flame; for as to the difficulties of the road, our youths laughed at that notion, and only collected that they should have to pass through a part of the county very little frequented; the wildness of which would probably make it additionally interesting to them.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE signal was now given for departure, when an unwelcome report reached Lord Mondomer — that his favourite mare was suddenly taken ill. He could, indeed, have gone on, leaving a servant in charge of her; but to that he had so visible a reluctance, that Alfreton insisted upon it no such plan should be adopted, or proposed even, and declared his fixed determination, whatever might be the inconvenience, to remain at Chesterfield till his friend had broken the neck of this disaster. He not only said this, but exerted himself to carry it through; and as the real disposition to be accommodating or agreeable to others is always apt to give the requisite powers for becoming so, he soon effectually mastered his own vexation, and busied himself, with success, in making Hugh comfortable till such time as they might be in condition to travel again. These good-humoured attempts were won-

drously favoured by their taking that opportunity to dine; and while conversing together after their meal, they had made up their minds to pass the entire night at Chesterfield, when a farrier was ushered into the apartment by the hostler with a bow and a smirk, as if the former had something to say very much to the purpose. That indeed was the case, though it took some time to make the discovery; for the learned professor began, with a dismal countenance, about his apprehensions that the animal had been suffered to feed too freely, or perhaps been injudiciously worked during the late hot weather; and if then put up in a full stable, not duly ventilated, it was not at all to be wondered at, that by the unwholesome smell certain symptoms should have been generated of an attack, which—— – However, it may be sufficient to say, that notwithstanding the mare was within a hair's breadth of being ruined for ever; this inestimable operator, or rather conjuror, had, by the simple process of bleeding, restored her to a state as perfect as when she commenced the day's journey. After he

had been fully rewarded, and praised rather according to the exhilarated spirits of his audience, than any superior merit of his own, once more the march was ordered upon Cromford.

" The obstinacy of some people," observed Lord Alfreton, when they were three or four miles to the south-west of Chesterfield, " is beyond my conception. What could it be to that fellow, provided we paid him to his heart's content for all that was eaten and drank at his house, whether we went by Cromford, or the other way? But having once committed himself in advice, one would have thought his salvation and every body's that belonged to him, was wrapped up in our following it."

" One would," said Mondomer. " And what were his reasons after all; something or other about the dreadful condition of the roads. Now d'ye call this road a bad one?"

" Upon my life, I think," returned the other, " its the best, without any exception, we have gone over to-day: narrower, indeed,

than some, but formed of good materials, and less cut up. That blockhead talked as if furrow land even, would be a relief to our horses in comparison of the road, the whole way; whereas every thing disagreeable of that kind is to come; and I'm confident the stage is not a long one."

As he said this; from an abrupt turning in the track they were upon, the angle of which was hid by a high hedge, issued a body of yeomen, sturdy fellows, and for the most part well mounted and armed. In passing our travellers, Alfreton recognised one to be a tenant of his father's, who, from particular circumstances, had been known to the young lord almost from his childhood.

With his usual warmth of disposition, he expressed much delight at seeing this man; and the other seemed as well pleased on his part: making, therefore, a sign to his companions that he should soon follow them, he remained a while with our friends, who had halted upon this rencontre.

After inquiries about the man's wife and

children, Lord Alfreton observed, "You're moving in a strong party, Vaux. Where do you all come from?"

"Some from Wardlow; some from Ashford, my lord, and some as far off as Chapel in le Frith, Kettleshulme, and thereabout. We're a good possè in company, to be sure; but not a man too many, my young lord. You must understand we've most of us a trifle o' cash for the Chesterfield market, that we've no fancy to lose."

"What danger is there of your doing so here in these parts?"

"More than's quite pleasant, I can promise you, my lord. You've been down in the north I think for these many months?"

"For a good while, certainly," said Alfreton.

"Ah, sir!" returned the farmer, "this country's got a bad name since you travelled here last; and what's worse, it deserves it I fear. Howsoever, you're well furnished and attended; or, by my faith, I'd recommend to

ye to go no further in these here thickets and wilds: you haven't half an hour's good light, take my word for't."

"By the way," cried Mondomer, "this may tend to explain a great deal of what has confounded us in the course of the day. The landlord at Chesterfield, my friend," addressing himself to the yeoman, "was as urgent to prevent us from going on as if his own life had been at stake. But still he only talked of common difficulties, bad roads, and the like: now up to this point the road certainly cannot be complained of."

"Oh, bless your heart!" returned Vaux, "there's no need to quarrel with that."

"We can hardly be six miles from Cromford now," said Alfreton.

"Cromford!" cried the farmer, with a shake of the head: "and yet, I don't know, two active young gentleman, with such a train: pshaw, ye may go on very well: but d'ye mind, my lord, keep together, and don't lose your way. No harm in the roads, but they're

being so small and all alike: every different set o' folks makes a track for themselves when you get deeper in the woods."

"But after all, Vaux," said Lord Alfreton, "you have never told us what there is to apprehend?"

"Lord save you, Master Lionel! Maltravers and his gentry have been amusing themselves along the whole line of country, from Matlock to Bangor, for these two months: they driv' 'em out o' Staffordshire, and hung one or two, or shot 'em, or somewhat; and now——"

"No! is it so faith?" replied Lionel: "why couldn't that scoundrel at the inn have told us the fact, instead of a parcel of nonsensical lies, which he might be sure would have no effect upon one?"

"Ah, my young lord," said Vaux, with a second shake of the head, "they innkeepers and fellows have either much too close an acquaintance, or else they're somehow under the power of them freebooters: you'll never get no real information from the innkeepers."

"That's true enough," observed Hugh, "as we have found in more than one instance. But we are detaining you from your company, my good sir!"

"Can I be of any use at all, gentlemen?" said the farmer, who thought there was something in that last observation worth attending to.

"None, thank you; none whatever," replied the young men; and, with mutual "Good nights," Master Vaux scampered after his friends at the utmost speed his horse was capable of.

"I never heard of this Maltravers before," said Mondomer. "What he is, is pretty clear; but do you know any thing of his history?"

"Little or nothing," returned his companion: "he was a soldier, if I've been rightly informed, and has been in most of the wars abroad that have happened in his day. However, I have chiefly heard of him as an outlaw of the most active and audacious description; a sort of a Robin Hood: and many's the time

formerly that my nurse has kept me quiet by the threat of making me over to him as a free gift."

"Do you know," said Hugh, "I am by no means without suspicion that the person who thought fit to obtrude his counsels upon us at Rotherham, and was afterwards so inquisitive with our people on the road ——"

"Oh, to be sure!" cried Lionel, breaking in upon him; "I have not the remotest doubt that 'twas one of his band, if not Maltravers himself."

"It was fortunate enough," observed Mondomer, "that he happened to be so completely misinformed with respect to our movements; for I'll be bound he is waiting for one of us, in the direction of Wardslow and Tideswell, at this moment."

"Are your lordships sure," said one of their followers, riding close up with them in the midst of this discourse, "that we're in the right road?"

"Sure! yes — I suppose so," said Hugh: "why shouldn't we be?"

"Because, my lord, according to the account they give us at Chesterfield, and the pace your lordships ha' been riding at, we ought to have passed through a little place they call Stretton by now. We all thinks as your lordships ha' got too far to the right —"

"What provoking stupidity!" cried Lord Alfreton, "not to tell one before, if any of you suspected we were getting out of the track."

"Perhaps," said Mondomer, softly, "they were not aware of it themselves at the time of the first deviation. I doubt, my good lord, we are just the two worst people living to conduct a night march through an unknown country. Look at the sky; the glow of the setting sun is fast fading; and what's to be done now?"

"Shall we try to get back to the point where we first fell out of our way?" said Lionel.

"I know not what to make of it," returned Hugh. "Should you, or any of you," said he to the servant, "know the exact place where we got wrong, if we were to return to it?"

"I can't say as I should, my lord," replied the man; "and after all we ben't sure as your lordships isn't right still; but thought it best to mention about that there village."

"I'm for keeping, at all events, as straight as we can," said Mondomer, after a moment's pause; "there is a certainty, in my opinion, that by so doing we must either break out at last upon Winster or Cromford. Go back, and tell them all to form close together: let them follow immediately behind us; or at least much nearer than they have done hitherto: let nobody straggle, for we shall soon be scarce able to see each other at two yards' distance."

These orders being delivered, they continued their course; Lord Alfreton's head full of Maltravers, murderers, and caves. He proceeded in silence, not in any degree relishing their situation; but working himself up to do his duty well when the danger (of the occurrence of which he scarcely entertained a doubt) should arrive.

Mondomer, meanwhile, was thinking also

of the very same personage; but with a decided belief that, in consequence of the information erroneously given by their followers near Chesterfield, there was no great chance of their falling in with him that night. He resolved, therefore, to dismiss the matter from his mind.

"There will be a moon by and bye," said he.

"Aye, at eleven o'clock, or thereabouts," replied the other; "and 'tis now seven perhaps: amongst all these horrid brambles and underwood the darkness will be tenfold."

"Brambles and what?" cried Hugh. "Aha! I'm positive it must be so; just the very same face of the country. I can assure you, my Lord Alfreton, this is not the first time that I've been benighted in this part of Derbyshire. In my way down to Northumberland, at the beginning of July, I met with the strangest adventure somewhere here that ever yet befell me."

"From thieves, I suppose?"

"Poh! no," replied Hugh. "The Earl of

Essex, it seems, was in quest of a man who, as he suspected, had meditated some desperate mischief against his person. The man, I much fear, was ——"

"A robber," cried Alfreton.

"Far worse," returned the other. "I fear he was one of those horrible beings who have forfeited all the best hopes of our race, and connected themselves with the enemy of mankind."

"How d'ye mean—a sorcerer?" cried Lionel; "go on, go on, my dear Mondomer, tell us all about him."

"It happened," continued Hugh, who thought this topic a fortunate one for beguiling the time, under their present circumstances—"It accidentally happened that I fell in with the very wretch they were in pursuit of, and soon after with the earl and his people. I had never seen Lord Essex before, and found him so totally different a person from what I should have expected, such a frankness in his manner, and even playfulness, upon subjects too——"

"Yes, yes—but the sorcerer," said Lionel, "the sorcerer."

"Why, I'm not sure," replied Hugh, "that you can form a better idea of the wood where I met him, than from this very lane,—but you must observe, in the first place——"

"Take care, my lords! look to yourselves!" cried one of their train.

Immediately a rustling was heard among the shrubs to the left, and a confused hum, like voices at some distance:—A horseman now burst from the copse into their track, in the little interval between the leaders and their suite, who were fast coming up.

"Hold! who goes there? Stop, or you're a dead man!" was sounded in every direction around this stranger.

He readily obeyed, beginning likewise to supplicate for his life; but, after a cursory view of the party, he exclaimed—

"I see, I see, you're gentlemen,—thank my stars!—gentlemen on a journey——for mercy's sake follow me and deliver him."

"Who? what? Speak out plainly, fellow!" cried Alfreton.

"My master's in their hands, and has been murdered by this time, over and over again! ——Oh! gentlemen! if ever you shall hope for assistance when you're murdered yourselves, follow me."

"What shall we do?" said Alfreton; "I am ready to venture, if you will."

"Beyond a doubt," cried Hugh; "make haste, man; we'll be with you; lose not a moment;" and into the heart of the wilderness they dashed,—stumbling over roots, running foul of the trees and each other, and crashing among the branches; till, on a sudden, a volley of angry oaths, succeeded by another of fire-arms discharged at random into the wood, convinced them that the enemy was at hand; and directly afterwards, they obscurely perceived the latter drawn up on a plot of bare turf. The headmost of our friends, he who had met with fewest impediments in the thicket, now became visible to the banditti, one of whom rode furiously at him, and, after

a short conflict, cut him down. Hugh and several more were, by this time, free from the copse; and the others, seeing their increasing numbers, fled on every point. Mondomer observed somebody fall, and, marking the man whose deed it was, made towards him. The latter called lustily to his companions to stand their ground; but as they would not, he likewise thought it prudent to make a push for his escape.

In this attempt, (from his knowledge of the place) he would probably have succeeded; but Hugh, now pretty close, fired at him with his pistol, which, though it missed the rider, killed the beast he was upon, and the fellow being entangled under his horse when they both fell together, was secured by some of the attendants.

"Don't scatter, don't scatter," cried Lord Mondomer; "pursuit among these thickets is out of all question."

"But where's my lord? where is my master?" said the man who brought them there.

"Plague take your master, and you too," cried one of the others. "My Lord Alfreton is killed!"

"Gracious Providence forbid!" exclaimed Mondomer in an agony of grief; then seeing him on the ground, supported by one of his servants, Hugh threw himself beside him, and, by the pressure of the other's hand, was relieved from his greatest fears.

"My good and gallant friend," said Hugh, "speak, if but one word. How is it with you? Do let me hear the sound of your voice,—where is your hurt?"

"I doubt about quitting this world yet, Mondomer," said Lionel, feebly indeed, but cheerfully; for though he could not utter for some moments after his fall, his spirits were sound, and he by no means thought ill of his own state. Hugh's delight at this reply was unbounded, and great was the satisfaction of Alfreton's servants, by whom their young lord was much and deservedly beloved. One of the followers now informed Hugh that the prisoner wished to speak with him; but he

did'nt hear a word that was said, and continued anxiously inquiring into the condition ot Lionel's wounds.

" Tie something round my head," said the latter; " the worst cut is there, on the right side. I've another upon the thigh, but that's not much."

When this had been performed, with all the care and tenderness that circumstances admitted of, Hugh observed—

" Nothing can be done to the purpose unless some one will strike a light; do pray attend to nothing else, 'till you can find a flint; or stay, rub——"

" There's somebody else hurt, my lord," said an attendant. " I never heard such a groaning as there keeps up yonder to the right."

There was now a deep silence; and sounds of terrible lamentation were indeed heard, and only interrupted by this remark from the prisoner, in a tone as cool and composed as if he had merely lost some game of chance

" Curse those boys! They've been in my

way the whole day long. Here, you foolish fellows, feel for what you want in the pocket of my doublet: how can you expect a gentleman to assist you, when you've pinioned his arms as if he was being crucified."

One of those who stood guard over Maltravers, (for that great man it certainly was) thought proper to follow this strange advice, and found, assuredly, all the materials that could be wanted for procuring a light. When that was effected, they made a blazing fire of underwood in the midst of the bare spot they had all collected upon; and by so doing, much refreshed and comforted Lionel: while Mondomer hastened to the point from whence the moaning proceeded, which, at sight of the blaze, had increased as if the complainer was under momentary expectation of being roasted and devoured.

Our hero found a man upon the grass, in the middle of an alder bush, and apparently unable to move. In an instant he was raised between Hugh and one of the attendants; and being brought within the circle formed round the

fire——It is not easy to conceive a less dignified figure than the Earl of Nortonborough exhibited, bound hand and foot, and more than three parts stripped to the skin.

He was supplied with some clothes from the baggage of our young friends; and while engaged in adorning himself therewith, Lionel's colour changed, and he complained of faintness. Some water was procured, with which they bathed his temples, but Mondomer became excessively uneasy. How near they might be to a human habitation he had no conception; and the thoughts of his friend having to pass the night amid those wilds, were not to be endured.

"My lord," said the prisoner, who stood contemplating Lord Alfreton with the same air of pity, and about as much real sorrow and compunction, as a thorough-paced man of the world regards his antagonist whom he may have dangerously wounded in a duel; "I am truly concerned at the misfortune of this young gentleman, which, however, I am convinced is not alarming, and I have seen a good

deal of the sort of thing. Nobody, I imagine, knows better than your lordship, that when a man's driven to the wall in dangerous situations, the necessity of the case requires a little exertion on his part."

Hugh looked astonished at this very unexpected impudence; and the brigand proceeded:

"Your lordship will do me the justice to say, that in the interview with which I was honoured this morning at Rotherham, I gave very fair and honest advice as to the road that would be freest from mischief."

"True; you did so: you undoubtedly did," replied Hugh, struck with the circumstance. "That must have been, you unprincipled thief!" cried Nortonborough, whose rage had kindled as his fears subsided; "that was, thou most audacious villain! because you well enough knew that I should pass from Ashborn to Chesterfield slightly attended, and you wanted to get them out of the way."

Maltravers smiled; and again turning to Hugh, who was kneeling by Lord Alfreton, and endeavouring to place him in a more easy

position, "Things are not so bad," said he, as you suppose, my lord: there's a single house within a mile; aye, within little more than half a one of this very spot."

"You means the Crown, don't ye," said Lord Nortonborough's servant; whose voice his lord no sooner heard, having entirely omitted, from the distress and confusion he was in, to notice the other before; than he began a bitter course of invective upon that man's and his fellow-servant's cowardice in deserting him; adding, at the conclusion of his lecture, "Two such poltroons are just the sort of rascals to have been in league with the gang."

In this surmise, uncharitable as it seems, we are sorry to say, his lordship was but too well founded; for though the man then present did surely run away in good earnest, to save his own life, and had in fact brought about his lord's deliverance; that only happened because the other, his general confederate in pilfering and all kinds of fraud, had not, upon this occasion, let him into the secret. That worthy

character, it is supposed, meant to get the whole reward from Maltravers, and keep it to himself; for by his signal alone the robbers acted. He had therefore disappeared, wisely resolving never more to shock the earl's feelings by coming within his observation. Lord Alfreton was now lifted upon a cloak, which his own people bore up, Hugh assisting; and guided by the prisoner's directions, over whom they constantly kept a sharp look out, they soon reached a house, which Mondomer immediately recognised to be the same where he and the Lord Essex had passed the night in the preceding summer. Our hero's knowledge of the locality proved here a great convenience: the largest apartment was pitched upon for Lionel; all the clean linen that the place could furnish was put in requisition, and applied to the best bed. Another was brought into some sort of order for that domestic who was to sleep in his lord's room; and as the object of the party was not to turn the family at the Crown and Thistle out of their own house into the fields, something resembling

beds were made up for Hugh and Lord Nortonborough in two dirty lofts, over outhouses. Meantime the domestics and followers established themselves, partly in a barn, partly in a wash-house, for the night, and were next day distributed amongst the huts of a straggling village, between three or four miles off.

A narrow garret over a part of Lord Alfreton's chamber was chosen for the prisoner; and a stout lad from Lionel's suite detained in the inn, as his peculiar gaoler; though all were enjoined to keep a strict watch upon him.

After these matters had been arranged, and Lionel was reposing himself in a bed, widely different indeed from what he had been used to, but heaven itself when contrasted with his late expectations of passing the night in the open air; Hugh came up to consult with him about medical assistance.

"I am informed below," said he, "that there's a skilful, sensible man at Winster; but the people of the house, though they know every step of the way blindfold, refuse to send any of their fellows till day-break."

"Oh, don't disturb 'em, on any account," replied Alfreton; "they'll have trouble enough before we leave them: I am much better now; I am, I assure you—the bleeding has quite stopped, and there's little doubt of my sleeping. Bless you, Mondomer! you have done every thing in the world for me; we shall like to talk this over hereafter;" and, with a faint smile, he shook hands with Hugh, who, leaving him to the care of his servant, descended to the kitchen.

He there found the Earl of Nortonborough, instead of thankful for his escape, fretting, sputtering, and wrangling with every body around him in general, and the prisoner in particular, who had not yet been removed to his ward.

"I insist," said he, "that besides my clothes I had two rings of immense value: now where are they?"

"You have had me searched in every pocket, and wherever else you could think of," replied the brigand; "and I tell you now, as

I told you at first, they are in the possession of some one else."

" And when, and how shall I ever recover them?"

" I could give your lordship," said Maltravers, " many a shrewd hint upon some other subjects; but as to those rings, I really believe you had better make up your mind to the loss."

" At all events, thou base marauder!" cried the earl, " there is one satisfaction left to me: I now know who you are, and shall have the gratification of witnessing your certain execution, for the many enormities you have for years been in the daily habit of committing. If only one of the gang was to be taken — 'tis well, we've secured the leader!"

" We!" retorted the robber: " does your lordship actually presume to say we?"

" How could I assist?" said Nortonborough, whose vanity was so piqued that he condescended to argue with the felon: " I, who lay disarmed and fettered upon the ground, expecting every instant to be murdered?"

"Go to," replied Maltravers. "Murdered, quotha! Who spared your miserable life, when, according to all the rules of our trade, we should have been well justified in putting you to silence, for the bleating and bellowing you made? Go to! you're a poor animal."

The earl was here so convulsed with indignation, that he positively could not reply. Lord Mondomer thought fit to interfere.

"Your conduct, man, I am sorry to say," said he to the captive, "will be hereafter extremely disadvantageous to you: under your present awful situation, this insolence is highly misplaced and unbecoming; and to prevent your injuring yourself farther, let him be taken immediately to the room where he is to be kept in custody."

"My Lord Mondomer," said the robber, exactly as composed as ever, "you are a gentleman. I don't flatter you: but I've known a little of mankind in my day. I must speak with you apart, for I have something to tell of the utmost imaginable importance to one of your greatest ——."

This speech, however, was cut short by a signal from Hugh to the attendants; and Maltravers hurried to his place of confinement.

" Your honour's always among we at a bustling time," said the landlord to Mondomer; " but so gentle you be, and so soon satisfied your own self, that it's a pleasure to work for ye, and do what one can."

" And yet, my man," returned Hugh, " all my entreaties couldn't prevail upon you to send over to Winster, in aid of my poor wounded friend above."

" Ah, your honour, my lord," replied the host; " an I'd sent 'em never so much, they wouldn't ha' dared to a' gone to-night, not they, with Maltravers's folk all scattered abroad, and roaming over the whole face o' the land, like distracted! But what I can, I'd gladly do for your honour; and that is, new laid eggs, and as good bacon as you'll see any where in England."

" By Jove! my Lord Mondomer," said Nortonborough, to whose ears the last communication sounded pleasanter than any re-

marks he had heard for several hours, "all that strikes me as extremely rational. But where shall we sup?"

"Here to be sure," replied Hugh.

"What, in this horrid kitchen?" cried the earl, "with the cook and subordinate demons of the place about, frying, toasting, scolding, stewing, and performing all their abominable rites every where around us?"

"Pish!" returned Mondomer; "what harm will they do us, or we them? Two hours ago, I fancy, your lordship would have gladly crawled here upon your hands and knees."

Nortonborough looked as if he by no means entered into the humour of that observation: it, however, silenced his objections; and when the supper was ready, his appetite seemed very little deranged by the homeliness of the apartment.

CHAPTER XV.

WHEN their repast was ended, the earl, after duly lamenting the inevitable absence of every thing in the nature of wine, mixed up some composition by the aid of spirits, which he pronounced incomparable; and Mondomer here agreed with him. The former now got into tolerable good temper again, and observed upon the adventures of the day with a sense of present comparative comfort; and some expressions, the first he had been heard to utter, of gratitude to those who had rescued him.

"An obligation, my lord," he added, "that I never can forget either here or any where else; and from the accident of my near relations, the Howards, being in high favour and office, and any little influence in the great world that I myself, perhaps ——. These things are all luck and chance; but your lordship may command me to the latest hour of

my existence. He's a nice lad, that Alfreton: something odd, I've heard. By the way, wouldn't it be taken well if I were to go up and inquire after him?"

"On no account whatever, my lord, to-night," said Hugh. "To disturb him from the sleep that I trust he is enjoying, might have the worst possible effect. I firmly believe he is now going on favourably; and depend on it, he shall hear of your intended civilities."

"That rascal, Maltravers, as they call the fellow, gave him the hurt: didn't he? By the pope and cardinals, 'twas well 'tis no worse."

The cooking for all the rest of the people stowed in and about the house, being now concluded; mine host, with his wife and assistants, withdrew to a sort of scullery behind, after making up the fire; and left the two noble peers in undisturbed possession of the kitchen.

"How little, my Lord Mondomer," observed Nortonborough, with the air of Socrates himself, "how little human nature absolutely

requires! A meal's a meal after all: I don't suppose I could eat a morsel more, if we were suddenly transported to my own hall, with— what one might fairly call a supper on the board before us!"

"Your lordship's very good health!" said Mondomer as he lifted the goblet to his lips.

"What an unpardonable neglect!" cried the other suddenly. "I have to beseech your excuse ten million times; but the unpleasant circumstances under which we met, will perhaps be a sufficient apology for my not congratulating your lordship before, on the exalted change in your situation since we last saw each other."

Hugh bowed.

"The late lord's death was unexpected I think, poor man! I had a value for him; and have some reason to know that, however mistaken in it, he entertained the highest opinion of me. Why—— I give you my honour, I never could quite comprehend. What do you mean to do?"

"To do?" said Hugh, with a stare.

"Aye," returned the former; "shall you shut up in the North, and fancy yourself an ancient baron; or shall you bustle in life, push for admiration, ambition — that sort o' thing, and become one of the court set? To be sure you will, at your age, and with all—I don't mean to compliment — but with all your advantages. In the latter case, I may be of use to you probably."

"Your lordship is obliging," replied Hugh, without much adverting to what he said.

"And I'll tell you how," continued Nortonborough. "Allow me, however, first of all, to remind you, that you were wrong — very wrong, in quarrelling with Rochester: that was a wretched oversight."

"I own I am surprised at my Lord Nortonborough's introducing the subject of that night's difference. He is just the last person in being from whom I should have expected it," returned Mondomer, remembering, though indistinctly, the part which the earl himself had taken in the controversy; "and

you will permit me to say, that, to the best of my remembrance, it is not so entirely clear that I *was* in the wrong."

"Pooh!" cried the other; "you don't suppose I meant as to the dispute itself; of that I recollect nothing, and didn't much attend to it at the time. Something about burning the bishops: wasn't it? I've no doubt you talked as well as all the fathers put together could have done. No, no; the error was, throwing away the introduction of your aunt, and your acquaintance with one who could have served you beyond all the world. The worst of it is, that Rochester, though the most delightful fellow in the universe, is uncommonly high; and when he's once offended, its no easy matter —— However, I've a notion I can bring things round."

"Do not give yourself any trouble, my good lord," said Hugh, "about that matter. If the Lord Rochester chooses to favour me with his intercourse, he will always find me where he thought fit to leave me, without the slightest ill will or resentment on my part.

But, for heaven's sake! let us hear of no schemes and contrivances towards it."

"Ah! the 'high horse' will never do," returned the earl: "but you're a young man, Lord Mondomer; and I can make allowances for the notions of spirit, dignity, independence, and the deuce knows what, natural to your time of life. Faith! you don't know what you lose. My connexions, situation, and so forth, you will allow to be considerable. Now, upon my reputation, I owe more of any little distinction I may have attained to my intimacy with that most fascinating fellow, than to all the rest of my advantages over and over again. And when you're thoroughly acquainted with Rochester, you've no conception of the wit and talent there is about him."

"His address, without doubt, is eminently agreeable if he chooses," said Mondomer; but I never heard much of his talents. He was represented to me as totally illiterate, at all events, when the king first took to him."

"Bless your heart," cried Nortonborough; "what has genius to do with education and

poring over books? though his majesty has made him a tolerable scholar likewise, they say. This stuff's very fair, an't it? prettily mixed, hey? Come, fill—fill, and I'll tell you one of the best practical jokes — I thought his majesty, upon my soul, would never have done laughing when he heard of it! —— One evening Carre (for he wasn't made a viscount at that time) proposed to me to have some adventures and fun in the city. Now there was one Stephens, a drawer, at the Devil Tavern, who had lived with me formerly; and this fellow we bribed to disguise us like two of his fellow-servants. Well, sir, in this capacity we waited upon Ben Jonson, the writer, and a whole club of brutes of that stamp. As night advanced, these dogs swilled, and swilled, and jabbered, and got into such an argument (as they called it), all storming and roaring at once, that you might have heard 'em down at the Tower. Just then there was a hallooing for more wine, and Carre and I making our appearance (as drawers, you see), took the flasks entirely off

the table, extinguished all the lamps, and left these wiseacres to finish the discussion in total darkness. — That spark Rochester, though, played me a sorry trick; for on hearing their door open as we went off, he pushed by me upon the staircase, and gained the street in a moment; while, as ill-luck would have it, a cloutering vulgar ruffian overtook me, with such a kick on the hip-bone, that I cleared all the remainder of the stairs at once. — I'm not sure that I don't feel it now, at times."

What portion of this story pleased Mondomer best, we do not undertake to say; certain it is, that he was to the full as much diverted as the narrator could have desired.

Pleased with his success, the earl went on in much the same strain.

"He's a remarkable clever poet, too, Rochester is, I can promise you. — Did you ever hear any of his little things that were handed about with immense applause in the set?"

"I don't think I have," replied Hugh,

"which was probably owing to my not being much in 'the set' myself."

"That very Stephens, the drawer," continued the earl, "that I was telling you of, died in the course of the same year, through an internal strain (as 'twas supposed) which he got in moving a large oaken table from the ground-floor to a three pair of stairs room. He was a loss to us, for the rascal was useful enough in our pranks; and my friend the viscount declared he would write his epitaph. It took beyond every thing, but I'll tell you what—'twasn't all his own: I gave him myself a confounded fine epithet in the last line, that I stole from a play which I'd seen over at the Bank Side, at the Globe, the day before.

These were the verses: —

"'Here lies Stephen, the drawer, a stout man, and able,
When living, so skillfully none turned a table:
Let all his admirers now clap on their sables,
Since grim-visaged death hath on him turned the tables.'"

"Now, that's what I call a jeu d'esprit!"

"Admirable, indeed," cried Hugh, who

took this opportunity to have his laugh thoroughly out at his companion's follies; then, after softly ascending to Lionel's chamber, and ascertaining that he slept, he retired to his own nook, having had quite enough of the Earl of Nortonborough, his intimates, and his anecdotes.

Much as remained to be done at the Crown and Thistle, and indispensable as the earliest hours consequently were to the landlord and his family, none were stirring before Lord Mondomer; who learnt with mixed feelings, that his friend, after a long and for the most part a sound sleep, had awoke several hours before day-break, and was not so entirely free from fever and restlessness as might have been wished. In the imperfect state of communication throughout the island at that time of day, it was no practicable matter to apprize Lord Alfreton's relatives of his situation, with the celerity that Hugh was impatient for; and no means occurred of so doing at all, without despatching a man and horse

to his father's seat in Cheshire, for that express purpose.

This measure, therefore, Mondomer determined upon, though he ventured to delay it till the surgeon had given in his report. For the attendance of the latter a messenger was sent off without loss of time; and this business being settled, Hugh strolled into the fields, ready for the moment when Lord Nortonborough (whom he hoped shortly to get rid of altogether) should honour him with his company at breakfast. Meanwhile, Maltravers had employed the whole night in ruminating upon his own situation and prospects, which, notwithstanding the air and flighty manner that he had carried things off in below stairs, he found, upon impartial examination, sufficiently unpromising; as it occurred to him, that even if his outrage upon a man of Lord Nortonborough's importance had not been abundantly sufficient of itself to hang him — other accusations — and what was worse, other proofs, that must ensure such a result — would be forth-

coming in plenty, as soon as he was known to be in custody. He therefore commenced his operations (but with much address) upon the gaoler who had been set over him; and when he shortly discovered that the young fellow was in truth a trust-worthy servant, the prisoner shifted his ground; and without giving Lord Alfreton's man reason to think he meditated any design upon his honesty, the other expressed a desire to see Lord Mondomer, to whom, as he protested, he had a communication to make of the utmost possible consequence.

The guard, disposed to gratify him as far as he fairly could, sent word to Hugh of his repeated request, and our hero acquiescing, made his appearance in the garret.

"Your lordship will readily imagine," said the brigand, "that what I have been so earnest to say to you in particular, will admit of no third person's presence while I relate it."

Hugh hesitated an instant, and then desired the attendant to leave the place till he should be called for again.

" And now, sir — what is your will with me?"

" Unless I am greatly misinformed, my Lord Mondomer, your whole family have been ever much connected with Sir Giles Harlande, of Belton Hall, in Cumberland?"

He here paused, eyeing Mondomer attentively, as if to observe the impression which this opening of the business had made.

" You are right," said Hugh, hastily, " and what of that?"

" I happen to be informed of a circumstance," returned Maltravers, " which concerns Sir Giles in the highest degree, and have strong reason to believe that I am the only person now living from whom any explanation of that circumstance will ever be acquired."

" Do you mean Sir Giles himself," said Hugh, caught by the unlooked-for mention of a name which never failed to agitate him? " is it the old gentleman himself that your knowledge relates to? or — or any other of his family?"

" I mentioned the father," said this ob-

servant and experienced knave, " because one naturally speaks of the head of a house for the whole of it; but what I have to discover concerns them all most deeply."

". Then let me know it without hesitation," cried Mondomer; " you could not have met with another man so zealous to serve them."

" Sir Giles has a daughter, I think?" said the felon.

" A daughter!" returned Hugh, colouring! " He has three."

" Poor innocent things!" said Maltravers.

" Nay, where's the use of casting up your eyes, and making those exclamations?" cried Hugh, very impatiently. " You sent for me — here I am — go on, I say — go on with your story."

" Be not in such a hurry, my good lord," replied the robber. " What grace am I to expect at your hands if I oblige you? Come, young gentleman; one good turn for another is fair play all the world over."

" You need say no more," returned Hugh; " I see your whole contrivance. You must

have entertained but a mean opinion of my understanding to flatter yourself you should succeed in such a trick; for, putting all principle out of the question, I now recollect that you didn't know whether Sir Giles Harlande had any children, till I apprized you of it."

"Very well, my lord," said the felon, "vastly well hit off for so young a man.— True, I did not; but it is, nevertheless, a fact, that I am possessed of a most momentous secret relating to their family. Now I make you this open and honest proposal: you shall hear the whole: I am ready to impart it this instant. If you do not allow it to be important to the Harlandes, in a degree infinitely beyond what you can at present conceive, let things remain just as they are—but if you do—your lordship will give me your word of honour to accommodate me in a little affair that I am interested about."

"I am probably to blame," replied Mondomer, "for having listened to all this so long. Instead of unsuitable levity, buffoonery, and absurd plans for your escape, let me advise

you to think of your mispent life, and make what reparation you can for the evils you have committed: trust me, things are like to go very hard with you. Here guard, What's his name? Elford! look to your charge, and on no account quit the room, unless you have the positive orders of Lord Nortonborough or myself."

In a somewhat less time than even Hugh's eagerness had calculated upon, the surgeon arrived from Winster, where the news of Maltravers's apprehension had produced so delicious a sensation of relief from the continual irritation of watchings, alarms, and disturbances, as had not been equalled in these parts since the overthrow of Philip's Armada. The Machaon was of homely appearance, and blunt, in truth coarse manners, but (as it turned out) a man of vigorous understanding, though utterly unread in any medical work except the book of nature. He had studied that with effect, and such an ailment as a gash on the head was completely within the compass of his powers. He disdained to make worse of his patient's

case than it deserved: indeed Lionel, who had been tenderly brought up, and just then suffered a good deal of pain, was rather disgusted at his deportment in the contrary extreme, even including his doctor's confident prediction, that 'if he wasn't well soon, it would be just nothing else in the world but the young gentleman's own fault. Mondomer, however, was perfectly satisfied with the operator; and so well liked the sincerity and good sense of his remarks, that he determined to ride back with him to Winster. From thence, it was Hugh's object to bring back some articles of comfort for Lionel, as well as to despatch a horseman with an account of his mishap to Grawingbourne (pronounced Gray'burne) Castle, in the adjoining county; and he judged that the surgeon might be useful in procuring a messenger well acquainted with the cross roads.

They set off accordingly at a good round pace, and Maltravers, from his garret, chanced to see them depart.

CHAPTER XVI.

WHILE Mondomer was absent, the Earl of Nortonborough felt an ardent craving for knowledge upon a subject where ignorance was peculiarly painful, and had often annoyed him before; the subject, that is to say, of what it would be agreeable or advisable to do with himself. The paying a visit to Lord Alfreton was the first expedient put in practice towards relieving the earl from this distress; and in Lionel's chamber, after some common inquiries, the answers to which were never considered or even listened to by Nortonborough, the latter took the discourse entirely into his own hands; and expatiated upon the way to get the first acquaintance, the way to keep them, intrigues, his own person and connexions, scandal and dress, till (indeed long after) Lionel had become tired to death of him. The few words uttered by the invalid, consisted of hints for the other to depart; but

so distant and well-bred, that Nortonborough, not conceiving the possibility of his company being otherwise than delightful, had no suspicion whatever of them. How long poor Lionel might have been worried in this manner it is impossible to guess; very probably till a fresh fever had been lighted up. But a period was most opportunely put to the earl's inflictions by the appearance of Elforde, the man who kept watch over Maltravers. He brought information that the prisoner had complained of violent illness the whole night through; and communicated an earnest request on the part of his charge, that my Lord Nortonborough would have the affability and condescension to honour him with an interview of only two minutes, as he had something particular to say, that related to his lordship's person and property.

"Oh, ho! has he so?" cried the earl. "He's brought upon his knees at last, is he? Well, sir, you may inform him that I shall neither stop nor stoop to confer with any such impertinent scoundrel: do you hear?"

"Then your lordship won't have nothing at all do with him?" said the man.

Here Lord Alfreton, as the only chance of his deliverance from persecution, observed, "However little the prisoner may merit such an indulgence, it seems to me, that if he has any confession to make which can tend to your lordship's advantage ——"

"True — true," said Nortonborough: "the rings! I wouldn't lose one of them for the best estate in Derbyshire. Go forward, man," (to Elforde): "show me the way, or I shall break my shins upon this infernal dark ladder, that they call stairs, I suppose."

On entering the hole where Maltravers was lodged, the latter appeared stretched at full length upon the pallet: from thence he rose hastily, bowed himself almost to the floor before the earl, and supported himself upon the back of a chair.

"I am far — very far, from deserving this degree of unparalleled goodness, my lord," said he, in feeble accents: "but it is the characteristic of great minds to be most in-

dulgent to those who have offended them deepest. You see before you, my lord, an unhappy, and, what is most grievous, a justly unhappy man."

Here he held a towel, or something of that sort, up to his face, for half a minute perhaps.

"A wretch upon whom advice, education, example, have been alike thrown away; and who has now in full view, the inevitable and disgraceful death to which his crimes have reduced him."

"I presume," said the other, "that confinement and reflection have made you sensible of the extreme and almost inconceivable indecency of your conduct in talking to me as you had the madness to do last night. I assure thee, fellow, I could much rather have forgiven the violence——"

"Stop, I beseech your lordship!" cried Maltravers; "I cannot endure to have it recalled to my mind. Madness is an inadequate expression for the presumption I was then guilty of. Your lordship may believe me when I assure you positively, that

no circumstance in a life devoted to the breach of all laws, gives me half the pain upon recollection, that I suffer from the thoughts of my behaviour in the kitchen below here. Nothing can ever excuse it; and my condition at the time can alone account for it."

"What condition? how d'ye mean?"

"Nay, if your lordship did not perceive it," replied the robber, "I must despair of that forgiveness, which, before I quit this world, it is my sole remaining object to obtain. Intoxication! my Lord Nortonborough; high, and I should have thought, visible intoxication! Do you imagine that such wretches as we can make up our minds to the attack of personages scarcely below the royal family in weight and grandeur, without a free use of the strongest spirituous liquors?"

"You are not well," said the earl; "standing, I believe, is uneasy to you."

"Heaven forbid!" returned Maltravers, "that I should appear in any other attitude in your lordship's presence. Ill indeed I am; very ill; and whether I shall ever leave

this house alive, I have at times serious doubts."

"You were lying upon your bed when I came in," said Nortonborough, with complacency; "and I have no objection to ——"

"Oh, your lordship is too good; but it can't be thought of."

"I desire," cried Nortonborough.

"My lord — my lord!" said the brigand.

"I insist—" vociferated the earl.

The rogue obeyed.

"Now rest yourself," said Nortonborough: "I shall not permit you to speak at all for three minutes; but when you are in some degree composed I shall extend my attention to whatever you may have to impart."

For a good three minutes Maltravers held his tongue; which time was occupied in keenly observing upon the puffings and swellings that accompanied the dignified condescension of his companion.

"I think," said the robber, at length, "your lordship was inquiring after some ring or stone set in ——"

"There were two — there were two!" cried the earl; "not only of the utmost rarity in themselves, but, from different causes, valuable to me beyond conception."

"Your lordship will forgive," said the other, "the liberty I am going to take; but concerning such matters, it would be infinitely preferable to me to talk by ourselves."

Nortonborough, with the air of habitual command, waved his hand for Elforde to quit the apartment, which was immediately complied with.

"Will your lordship favour me," said Maltravers, "by drawing as near as you conveniently can; I am faint and weak, and it distresses me to exert my voice."

"It is never my system," observed the earl, "to bear unnecessarily hard upon a culprit; and had I known of your sickly state, you should not have remained without advice: there was a surgeon, or a druggist, or something here half an hour ago, in attendance upon young Lord Alfreton. Should you like to see him?"

"I feel sensibly your lordship's kindness," returned Maltravers, shaking his head; "but I have no great trust in any of that tribe. However, sir, when does he return, pray?"

"To-morrow morning," said the earl.

"Many, many thanks, my Lord Nortonborough, to your charity and nobleness of heart. Yes, indeed, it may be a satisfaction to me to consult him at that time, if your lordship pleases."

"You may depend upon it," said Nortonborough: "and now about my rings."

"Why, your lordship cannot expect me to betray my companions," returned the knave. "But nevertheless, close prisoner as I am, disarmed, and narrowly watched, under your lordship's masterly superintendance; and even sick and helpless upon my bed — I have yet the means, by a line under my hand, to procure the restoration of that property within twenty-four hours, at any time. Do not be under the slightest uneasiness as to that concern. Oh, dear, dear, it was not about such toys that I supplicated for this conference

with your lordship: far from it! I have offended you unhappily; and before my death, should wish to make what redress I can. I must now be plain. Instead of resting your consequence upon an intimacy with certain silly and frivolous favourites at the court, as much inferior to your lordship in merit as (one of them at least is) in birth, should you like to have those minions in your power?"

Nortonborough looked upon him as if stupified.

" I don't understand this," said he.

"Did you ever hear, my lord, of the he-witch — the necromancer — the demi-devil — Forman?"

The earl started. Often had he heard of such a person, and shrewdly did he suspect, that the man whom he most courted, flattered, and, from the weakness of his nature, really admired; knew more of that mysterious character than became him.

And then another close ally of that nobleman, (which ally Nortonborough altogether dreaded and detested) was, he doubted not,

still deeper involved in so horrible a connexion.

But Rochester and the Lady de Lyle had never admitted him into their secrets, of which he was sufficiently jealous; while he could not even imagine that the Countess of Essex, a near relation of his own, whose inferior capacity he even under-rated, should possibly be a prime instigator of their proceedings. These thoughts rushing at once upon his mind, kept him silent.

"I will now proceed," continued the brigand, "to drag forth that hell-hound, and deliver into your lordship's hands the reputation, fortune, and even lives of those, whom—that is, if my strength permits me—for every thing seems to turn round, and I—I feel, I don't know how—"

"Lay your head down for an instant," said the earl; "it will soon go off. Deuce take it! how very unlucky, just at this moment! The fellow's in fits! I must call in—"

"Stay, my lord, stay!" said Maltravers, feebly: "we must take—we must —— Ah!

there will be opportunities before the officers of justice arrive. Still there is one circumstance; but I am used to hardship, and if I live I'll—"

Here he again gasped and panted.

"What is it," returned the peer, "you would wish for? Is your situation at all unpleasant? For any indulgence consistent with safe custody I am disposed to extend to you."

"My kind and gracious lord!" replied the rogue, in a whisper; "this man of Lord Alfreton's, that they have set over me, is harsh, and rough: in illness one feels these things. Now, if your lordship would but deign to appoint another yourself——Not that I mean to say any thing against Elforde: but you comprehend, my lord; a man that will be ready to bring one broth, and any little matter of that kind."

"Say no more," returned the peer: "your request is not unreasonable. I shall replace this person by my own servant, and instruct him to be tender towards you in your present melancholy condition."

"That will be equal to my best notion of comfort, as things stand now: your lordship is far too good to me," said the knave, whose only difficulty was to repress the rapture and exultation of returning hope. He groaned piteously as Lord Nortonborough left the garret, and had the satisfaction of hearing positive orders enjoined upon Elforde, conformable to his warmest wishes. Elforde himself was somewhat surprised; but as his own master was in no state to give directions, and Mondomer had told him that the earl was to be obeyed; above all, being tired of his employment, and wishing to join his fellows, who were quartered in the village, he waited for nothing but to ascertain that the commands were precise, and mounting his horse, was out of sight of the inn long before Lord Mondomer came back from Winster. Hugh had arranged all his concerns at that place by eleven o'clock, and was just setting forth upon his return, when he overtook a lady and two gentlemen, attended like persons of rank, within a mile of the town.

The road was narrow, and, in the endeavour to pass them, he avoided, from civility, any temptation to stare at either; and had, as he imagined, got clear of the whole party, when the female exclaimed, " My Lord Mondomer! unless I am strangely mistaken."

Hugh turned in an instant, and accosted Alice Stanley with his usual politeness. Before he could, by way of apology, explain the cause of his haste and inattention, she observed, " Your lordship is not acquainted with my brother, I think."

Hugh made his bow to Sir George, and was also, in regular form, introduced to the friend, whose name we do not happen to remember.

" To be sure Lord Mondomer can tell us," said Sir George, " how much exaggeration belongs to a report we've just heard in the town here. It was no less than that Lord Affreton lies desperately wounded in a cow-house near at hand, incapable of being removed, and without the slightest change of his life.

Before Hugh could reply, the lady added; "And the remainder of the story was, that your lordship fought the robber, Maltravers, hand to hand, for six and thirty minutes, and were twice run through the body, when your followers came up and mastered him. But the evident accuracy of one part of the account puts one in tolerable ease as to all the rest."

Mondomer soon relieved them as to the hopeless state of Lord Alfreton, giving such a recital of the adventure, as made his friend the great actor and hero of the whole. When he described the ale-house where they had all taken up their quarters, loud and long was their mirth at the idea of the Earl of Nortonborough established at such a chateau.

"Where," continued Mondomer, "he professes his decided intention to remain till the sheriff and officers shall arrive from Derby, and take charge of our prisoner."

"I think I know the house," said Sir George Stanley, who was then, and often had been before, on a visit in the neighbourhood:

"an old, defaced coat of arms over the porch, belonging to Shem, Ham, or Japhet, I suppose, for nobody now living seems to have the least recollection of the family: part of the building brick, and the rest, a dark kind of stone, to all appearance, except one side — the western I think — and that once was white-washed."

"Quite accurate, Sir George," replied Hugh.

"I don't see," added the baronet, "why we shouldn't accompany your lordship the whole way back; by your report, Lord Alfreton must be well enough to see us: he would take it kind, perhaps; and for the other curiosities you have collected, Nortonborough, and the redoubtable Maltravers, I had rather have a peep at them in their present situation, than at any the rarest wild beasts on the face of the earth."

Hugh paused, and probably looked as if this proposal didn't quite hit his fancy; for Alice observed, "Don't you perceive the struggle between Lord Mondomer's courtesy and his real opinion, that, as things are, we

shall be very much in the way of Lord Alfreton and every body else? Besides, where will be the propriety of my invading a young gentleman in his chamber? Though, indeed, if the accomplished Earl of Nortonborough would deign to entertain me in the kitchen, while you paid your visit above stairs —— No, George; it won't do. But, perhaps, if Lord Mondomer is in no violent hurry, he will favour us with his company as far as St. Maure Cross; up to which point, I believe, both our routes are the same."

Hugh bowed, and with a remark, expressive of his good fortune in falling in with their party at all, continued at their pace, labouring to keep up a common-place conversation with the gentlemen, and wondering why Alice, who scarcely spoke a word herself, should have thought it necessary to detain him.

Soon, however, the baronet and his friend coming to an irreconcileable difference upon a question, Whether the sport of hunting consisted chiefly in finding out who had best spared their horses at the end of a hard run,

or in seeing the hounds make pretty hits? those two were completely engrossed by the discussion: and Alice, bringing her horse nearer to our hero, said, with an arch and peculiar look, "You recollect, perhaps, where it was that we met last?"

Mondomer, who had been thinking of nothing else from the time he joined them, replied, "Perfectly well, Mistress Stanley; and heartily concerned I was at being prevented from having the pleasure of receiving you at the castle."

"I have seen, I think, most of the fine seats in England," said the lady; but there is a character about Mondomer that interests me beyond them all. I should conceive now, it must resemble a castle amongst the mountainous parts of the neighbouring kingdom."

"Others have made frequently the same remark," replied Hugh.

"Your lordship's politeness is such," continued the young lady, "that I should not have hesitated in the request to have my curiosity gratified by seeing the place, even if

I had been surrounded by a company of total strangers to you; but, in fact, I was the most of a stranger of the whole party, you know."

Hugh's countenance fell upon this observation; and, to cut short any more of the same nature, "You must be aware, madam," said he, "of the afflicting intelligence which compelled me to leave you and your friends at that time."

"Of course I was," she replied, with great coolness, "shortly after you rode away, and nobody lamented it more than myself. My satisfaction in wishing your lordship joy of the honours you have succeeded to, is, I assure you frankly, very much diminished by regret at the loss of your uncle, with whom I was always a pet as a child, and consequently I delighted in him. But to return to the castle: it always struck me as odd, that having a wish beyond any thing almost to view that old mansion thoroughly; not in a common way merely, but at my comfort and convenience; it always seemed odd, I say, that I should have passed several days at Belton, without

such an excursion being even proposed. I naturally imagined that none of your family could be then in the country."

"Accidental I suppose," said Hugh: "for ever one is mistaken in little matters that we count upon: in a visit especially."

"For ever:" returned Alice. "What a pity it is that those girls (charming girls they are really!) should not have been brought out a little more into the world!"

"Do you think so?" said he.

"And yet the men," continued Alice, "seem to be of a very different opinion: there was Lord Alfreton, your friend, whom you are serving at this moment—I am used to some sort of attentions myself; but not a word could I get from him."

Here Mondomer sighed audibly, and became evidently uneasy.

The lady went on:—"That young man, with his romance and his nonsense, has no idea of putting the slightest constraint upon himself, his feelings carry all before them.

It was the amusement of the whole party to see him so irretrievably smitten with Blanche: which of the three is your favourite, Lord Mondomer?"

" It is astonishing to me, Mistress Stanley," said Hugh, in accents of remonstrance, " that you will continue to press me with these observations, when you must have seen, at the interview we were speaking of, that between the Harlande family and myself there is some ——. Heaven knows what — of misapprehension — of grievous and distressing misunderstanding, which I am determined, in spite of all their rebuffs and unkindness, to drive to an explanation before long. I had thought to proceed otherwise; but the comfort of my life is broken in upon, and I cannot endure it."

" Aye," returned the young lady, " now you mention it, I do recollect something indeed of bluffness and distance on the part of our honest friend, the knight, and — and — Bless me! the plot thickens; for as sure as

fate, Blanche (who was as well then as you are now) refused positively to join the expedition."

This was too much: and Hugh, with a formal inclination of the head, coldly assuring her that it was expedient for him to make more haste back than their conversation admitted of, was on the point of hurrying off in a most uncomfortable state of mind, when Alice seized his horse's bridle, and, looking him steadfastly in the face, burst into a laugh.

"You goose!" said she, "you are as bad as Lord Alfreton; or worse. How you are to go through the world, I can't conjecture: why, people will tease you to death, when you so readily show them they have the power of doing it. Don't make yourself absurd in the first place; and in the next, keep a good heart upon things."

Hugh had been utterly unused to this kind of treatment, except from his late uncle occasionally; and was no little astonished at being thus lectured as a child by a very young woman, with whom he was but slightly

acquainted. However, there was something about it apparently that did not altogether displease him; for he smiled in his turn, and observed, "Now I comprehend what is meant by 'so like Mistress Alice'—'only her odd way'—'nobody else could have said it'—and so forth. But since you are disposed to favour me with advice (which depend upon it I shall attend to), be kind enough, in the out-set, to explain the phrase, 'keep a good heart upon things.' What things?"

"Only just please to take my word for it," said Alice, "that the damsel thinks as much of you as you do of her. Who it is that has been making mischief between you I have not the slightest conception; so cannot enter into that. Somebody has, that's clear. But do not despond, man. Are you conscious of having deserved at all to forfeit her affections?"

"What excessively ridiculous stuff!" cried Hugh. "Affections, indeed! how can you be so silly? But supposing, for the moment, there was any thing in all this nonsense, I

would say — no. My conscience, I think, might permit the answer with confidence."

"Why, then, I say," returned the lady, "that Blanche Harlande is as good a girl as ever lived, and has never done — and what's more, never will do — which is a great deal beyond what I'd answer for in the generality of my friends — any thing to forfeit your's. So all will come right in time — it must."

"This we perfectly well know to be your mode of jesting," said Hugh, extremely pleased: "but did you in earnest think Lord Alfreton was paying his addresses to her? He's an amiable man — Alfreton."

"Yes, indeed," replied Alice; "amiable! Yes he is. I do not absolutely say addresses, mind, but attentions: there's the word. — He is desperate no doubt; he thinks her the princess ——— : some long word in an eastern tale that signifies first cousin to the moon: and she all the time is about as much in love with him as you are with me."

Hugh's spirits were now so gay, that he told her, according to that last illustration, Lord

Alfreton's success might be considered as certain; and continued heartily amused by her trifling and playfulness, totally forgetting the incompatibility of their party's pace, with his haste to proceed; and, when they parted company, declared he never had so pleasant a ride in the whole course of his life.

The Earl of Nortonborough was the first person Hugh cast his eyes upon when he alighted at the Crown. That great character was employed in parading upon an oblong piece of pavement in the court of the inn, and the difficulty that attended the operation of turning at both ends, and yet never quitting the narrow bit of pavement, constituted the amusement of this exercise; not to mention that he looked at his own legs the whole way backwards and forwards. He informed our hero that Alfreton was vastly come on, and only wanted somebody to entertain him now and then to make him as well as any man in England. He also mentioned that the landlord, a fat pursy man, had sustained a fall from one of his own cart horses, and was

soused, head over heels, in a black stagnant ditch close to the premises; at which event the earl thought he should have split his sides and expired upon the spot. His lordship likewise communicated the important detail of a battle that had taken place in the yard, between a little game fowl and one of the largest Turkey cocks he had ever set eyes on.

Notwithstanding this variety of amusements, the earl expressed himself relieved by Lord Mondomer's return, and proposed the having up dinner without further delay.

Of his arrangement in changing Maltravers' guard, he did not inform Hugh. Whether it was that he didn't feel quite sure of the latter's approbation, and wished to avoid a dispute; or, being determined upon another conference with the prisoner, the propriety of which step he much doubted in reality, he was of opinion that the less was said about that personage the more prudent it would be; or for whatever other reason, we do not profess to be apprized. Certain it is that the earl's servant had duly entered upon his new office under the follow-

ing circumstances:—On receiving his lord's instructions he forthwith repaired to the garret, where the freebooter lay groaning in a lamentable manner. "This is a bad job, Master Maltravers," said the newly promoted gaoler, with very much the air of an old acquaintance; "but my orders is to show all humanity about your disorder; such as water-gruel and that."

"Is your lord coming up now?" whispered the rogue between his closed teeth: "Is he just behind you?"

"Not he," said the other; "I left un in the yard, finding fault with my Lord Mondomer's horses."

Maltravers rose upon this reply, took a turn or two in his scanty apartment, stretched his arms, yawned, and sat down upon the bed side, making a sign to his companion to do the same, in the only chair that was to be seen.

"I'm thinking you ben't so cruel bad after all," said the Argus.

"Bad!" cried the robber; "were I ever so ill, you don't take me for the kind of

fellow to whine at a little sickness. If I am bad, Master Lipscombe, 'tis with pain of mind and not of body let me tell you. When the time comes, nobody can doubt, I fancy, that Dick Maltravers will meet his fate as well as another; but to have it hastened by an old friend! Oh! Master Lipscombe, that touches one. I couldn't have supposed it of you."

"Of me! What the plague does the man mean?"

"Nay, who was it then brought down those young lordlings, with all their rascally followers, upon us? And after you knew too, as well as I know my own name, the signal we attacked upon: three cracks running of Tornspeat's whip!"

Lipscombe now broke out into an unlimited profusion of oaths; first, as it should seem, totally unconnected with any thing that had passed before; but gradually taking the form of denunciations upon his own soul and body if he knew any thing at all about the matter. Indeed, in such ignorance had he been kept, according to his own statement, (which upon

this occasion happened to be true,) that he could not so much as tell whose gang it was, and thought his own life as much in danger as any other person's.

" Hush! hush! young Alfreton 's just below! gently," said Maltravers: " then, Tornspeat," he added, in a low voice, " is the confoundedest rascal now in existence! for if there was one thing more drummed into his ears than another, it was to take your advice through the whole business, as my oldest friend of the two, and your share of the booty to be equal of course. However, he 's cheated himself out of all that by his cunning, which is my only comfort."

" How so?" said the trusty guard; " don't you take it, the rest on 'em will let him divide? Thof' you're nabbed yourself, my lad o' wax, there 's my lord's rings, money, and the deuce knows what, among the boys, you'll recollect."

" Is there, indeed!" said the felon; " you were present, Master Lipscombe, when they searched me below stairs?"

" To be sure; I helped 'em, didn't I?"

"You're sharp hands," replied Maltravers; "but how was it you came to overlook this little article?" pulling out a small leathern bag, which contained the rings, of immense value apparently, besides as much gold coin as could be crammed into it.

Lipscombe's eyes sparkled.

"Now this is clever, captain; devilish clever, I must say. But how in the world you contrived it, unless the bag was in the belly o' thee, hang me if I can guess."

"Never mind that," said the prisoner: "What d'ye think your lord would do for me if I were to make restitution?"

Lipscombe made no answer, well aware that what the other had just asked was nothing to the purpose. He therefore looked anxious to hear the end of the proposal.

"I'll tell you what he'd do," continued the robber; "he'd give me good words, what he calls humane treatment, see me safe in the sheriff's hands, and hang me by his evidence afterwards. And if he would not, there are

from thirty to forty others now in the county that would."

"Look'ye," said the confidential watchman, "I'm a plain spoken man; and if you don't like what I says, there 's an end on't, there 's no harm done. Gi' me just six or eight o' them yellow bits, and I'll do ye — I'll do ye any little sarvice I can, you understand: come, hand 'em over without more words."

"Why, no," returned the brigand; "no, Master Lipscombe, that will hardly do."

"You surely forget, captain," said the gaoler, "that I can deliver the whole up to my master within the next five minutes, if I like."

"You can so," replied the other, "and perhaps get a tester for your pains." Then rising, and leading his companion to the window, "Do you notice that hill, bare more than half way up, and fringed at the top?"

"What of that?" said Lipscombe.

"There begins the wooded country, and when we are both in that copse, and not till

then, you observe, you shall have every thing in this bag except the rings, and your full share of them when they are carried to market. You shall, upon my solemn promise, upon my honour, as a gentleman."

He here laid his hand upon his heart, and Lipscombe seemingly judged this promise to be worth more than we should have imagined, for he rested with an air of deep consideration for some time; then regarding the other with an inauspicious movement of the head, and a half grin, "It can't be done, Master Maltravers," said he, "the thing 's unpossible. You're at the tip top o' the house; Lord what 's his name below, and another fellow in his chamber, besides Dubbins, who 's no great good will to you, and all his family, squalling women, and what not. And more than that, young Mondomer keeps a hell of a look out, and sees all safe, and the out-door fastened like the county gaol, before ever he goes to bed. Bless ye, no, the thing 's unpossible!"

"You have no objection though to talk

it over, Bob, in a reasonable quiet way," observed the prisoner.

"Ah! talking and doing 's two things, captain," replied Lipscombe, with a wink; "but couldn't one get a drop o' somewhat up here now that 's comfortablish for your stomach, considering you be so poorly, and at the point o' death?"

"Go and try, my boy," said Maltravers, "go down and try, but don't be long."

After the Lords Nortonborough and Mondomer had finished their dinner, arrangements having by this time been made through the fidget and assiduity of the former, which insured considerable improvement in their meals, the earl was visited by a fit of peevishness and discontent, that made him worse company even than usual. Of Hugh he stood in some awe; but upon Dubbins the landlord, his wife, and servant maids, his spleen was exerted without restraint; and on Mondomer's declaring his intention to sit with the invalid the greater part of the afternoon, Nortonborough

apologized, or rather accounted, for not paying him the same attention, by the extreme dislike to a sick room, which had been peculiar to him as long as he could remember. Besides, he had been up once already.

Being left alone, his thoughts turned to the conversation he had held with the prisoner in the garret: and so impatient did he become for the information which was to exalt him to a decided superiority in his own set, that he sent for his man forthwith.

" I hope, Robert," said the earl, when Lipscombe entered, " that my orders have been carefully obeyed. Have you supplied that unhappy man with the accommodations necessary to his comfort under his present dismal circumstances?"

" They be going forward purely, my lord," replied the fellow, emboldened by drink, " and I hopes to set 'un quite at his ease afore the night 's over."

" His state of penitence and dejection is truly pitiable," added the earl; " so much so, that if he can bear it, I have thoughts of

looking in upon him myself, and assuring him of my forgiveness."

"Bless ye, my lord! don't ye think of it," returned Lipscombe: "your lordship's kindness, if I may be so free to speak, has all flabber-gastered him like, as it is; and he 's a bit touched here, I fancy," pointing to his forehead, "for he rolls about crying as how your lordship be a base cruel fox, and he a hen, I think: no, no, that your lordship's a lamb, that 's it, and he ——."

"Ah, well! poor man! feverish, I fear," returned the peer: "you may tell him when he can comprehend it, that it is my intention to see him to-morrow morning before the surgeon arrives; and in the meanwhile Robert, let this person's miserable condition be a warning to you to your dying day. I am not strait-laced or puritanical, but steadily set my face against such irregularities, as have an inconvenient tendency towards rendering property insecure, and travelling dangerous."

Lipscombe departed with a low bow and promises of edification.

Nothing material, that we have heard of, was either said or done during the remainder of the evening; and rather earlier than the night preceding the lights were extinguished, all the inmates of the house a-bed, and most of them sleeping. Lord Alfreton dreamt that his father had consented to his marrying Blanche; and with the inconsistency natural to dreams, he made his offer, and was accepted at that very inn; Sir Giles and the rest of the family being present, and all in raptures.

He was setting out, he thought, with his intended bride to take a walk in the woods, and talk over their future happiness, when both were discomposed by the utterly unexpected appearance of poor Hugh Mondomer; who, however, turned out somehow or other, to their great relief, to be a married man. Upon that discovery, they walked on, the three together. But, as it seemed to him, nothing answered; all was uncomfortable; instead of entering into their feelings with the delightful warmth that Lionel expected, Hugh kept prosing on like Doctor Buttengall, exactly

in the same tone of voice, and wouldn't let any body put in a word but himself.

He was awakened from these unsatisfactory fancies by the snoring of his servant, which, with a certain degree of difficulty, he silenced, and was composing himself to sleep again, when some one seemed to be moving over head. He recollected it was in the prisoner's apartment, and couldn't tell what to make of the noise. Not that he knew the hour exactly, but felt convinced it was the dead of night.

He listened with more fixed attention, and again distinctly heard the scuffling footsteps of two persons, as if engaged and busy at work, and the sound of muttering in suppressed voices. Lionel now called loudly to his servant, but could not effectually rouse him, without getting up from his own bed. The man, however, answered with some connexion.

"Did not you hear a particular kind of noise over head?" said Alfreton.

"Yes, oh yes, I thought I did. What was it, my lord?"

"Pshaw! you know nothing about it," cried his master. "Now then, make an effort, sit upright. Are you awake now? Do you understand what 's said to you?"

"I am, indeed, my lord, quite broad awake as ever I was in my life."

"Then, hark!" said Lionel, "the robber is confined over head, and the moment's there's any talking or noise, open the window, and call out to Mondomer and the other in the out-buildings: I'll alarm this house in an instant. Now listen."

For about ten minutes all was completely silent.

"I hear nothing now," said Lionel; "do you?"

But the man was again fast.

Alfreton fretted at first, but, with his usual indolence, he made up his mind not to rise from his bed till he had a fresh cause for suspicion, and in a few moments enjoyed the most entire oblivion of all earthly cares, which endured until some time after day-break.

Over a brew-house that formed (though

they had no internal communication,) a sort of wing to the principal mansion, and on the same side with the garret where Maltravers was held in durance, lodged the illustrious Earl of Nortonborough; and, after the exhaustion of body and mind that he had suffered the evening before, he slept there (that night) as well as if he had reposed himself in the king's palace. Not so on the occasion we are now speaking of: he had taken no exercise during the day; his mind was worried and puzzled by the robber's suggestions, and fleas (we heartily wish we could safely say no more offensive vermin,) conspired against his slumbers. After long tossing, kicking off such bed clothes as he was provided with, and then, wretched as they were, pulling them on again; he was, however, at length gratified by a kind of doze, when he heard a dead weight drop to the ground, just under his window, as he imagined. This he thought odd, particularly as there was no room above him; and, in the next moment, he heard another. Something of a sound of whispering seemed immediately

to succeed the second fall. The earl pricked up his ears at this; but as it soon ceased altogether, his reflections were again veering towards the mysterious communication that was to be made by Maltravers in the morning; but at once, like a stroke of lightning, the very disagreeable idea occurred to him, that the prisoner was confined on the same side of the house with his own den, and that he had heard, what *might have been*, two men drop from some of the windows. This notion was so excessively mortifying, that instead of immediately stirring and making active efforts to rouse the people about him, his lordship exerted all his ingenuity to convince himself of the vanity of such apprehensions. The noise, he was persuaded, happened directly under his own window, which, in the supposed case, it could not have done. Then his man, Robert, (of whose morals he could, by no contrivance, flatter himself into a good opinion,) would not have dared to execute such treachery. He had no interest in it — none sufficient — 'twould have been favouring another at his

own expense, and forfeiting a good place for nothing. These conclusions kept him quiet, though far from comfortable, till dawn; for the instant there was light enough for the purpose, the earl rushed to his casement. The first object that his eyes encountered proved to be a line composed of two blankets, a rug counterpane, and a cloak. It was suspended from the window of the nearest garret, and reached within fourteen feet of the ground. This his lordship beheld, and turned as pale as a sheet.

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.

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